the weekly Standard

SEPTEMBER 20, 1999

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NOT CLINTON IS NOT ENOUGH
WILLIAM KRISTOL

The Truth About Vietnam

It was a just war, and we had it won.

by Fred Barnes

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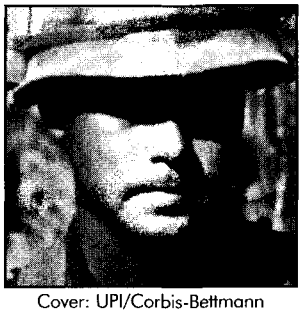

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the weekly Standard

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Bill Clinton's Favorite Bombers

Before deciding to offer clemency to 16 imprisoned members of the FALN, the Puerto Rican terrorist group, President Clinton no doubt solicited the opinions of a number of different people—his lawyers, his political advisers, representatives of various interest groups, and of course—ludicrous denials aside—his wife, the Senate candidate from New York. What's striking, though, is that no one from the White House called Richard Pastorella.

Pastorella, a former New York City police detective, knows quite a bit about the FALN. On New Year's Eve 1982, he was outside a federal building in downtown Manhattan when an FALN bomb went off. He and another officer were gravely injured. Pastorella was permanently blinded in both eyes. All five fingers were torn from his right hand. His body was peppered with shrapnel, and his hearing was destroyed. It took two years, 13 operations, and 22 titanium screws to repair his shattered face. Pastorella's family (including two teenage sons, both of whom are now New York City cops) remains devastated. "We will never have clemency from our injuries," Pastorella says.

Pastorella believes that at least one of the terrorists Clinton is set to release was directly involved in the bombing that blinded him. Some of the others, he says, helped steal the explosives for the bomb. All of them, he points out, belonged to a group that was dedicated to committing violence against the U.S. government. Between 1974 and 1985, the FALN committed at least 120 bombings around the country, killing five people and injuring more than 60. At the time they were arrested, some of the soon-to-be released terrorists were planning—and were videotaped by the FBI planning—to blow up two government buildings in Chicago.

Apologists for the FALN—and there are many, including, naturally, Jimmy Carter and Desmond Tutu—point out that none of the prisoners who are being released was convicted of setting off bombs that killed anyone. It's an argument, says Pastorella, that sets a new threshold for clemency requests: "Terry Nichols wasn't actually at the [federal building] bombing in Oklahoma City. So he can say what [FALN members] are saying: 'Well, I wasn't there. I had nothing to do with it.' Does that mean that we say to him at some point, 'Well, you spent ten years of your life in prison, you poor soul, why don't we let you out in society again so you can get a second shot at us?'"

Good question. And as Pastorella points out, if Clinton's FALN members had so little to do with the violence the group committed, how come the bombings stopped when they were locked up? Pastorella has other good questions, too: Why didn't Clinton wait until the FALN members showed contrition before offering to release them? How is making deals with FALN members different from negotiating with other terrorist organizations? And why didn't the White House ask for an impact statement from Pastorella or the widows and families of other victims of FALN violence? Pastorella doesn't know the answers to these questions because, as he said, no one from the administration ever called. ♦

Samuel Berger, Moral Midget

Desperate East Timorese Nobel Peace Prize winner Jose Ramos-Horta arrived in Washington last week to plead the case that the United States should do something to defend his countrymen from the Indonesian soldiers who have been on a murderous rampage against civilians in East Timor ever since they had the temerity to vote for independence in an August 30 referendum.

Ramos-Horta's pleas induced a different sort of desperation in the Clinton foreign-policy apparat, which has long maintained cordial relations with the thugs of Jakarta: How to stiff the Nobel Prize winner and not look bad in the process? This was a particularly delicate task given the expansive promises the administration made during NATO's Kosovo offensive that it would never again turn its back on slaughter of the sort now being visited on the Timorese.

Needless to say, it was not the Clinton team's finest hour. First, secretary of defense William Cohen reached for the hoariest cliché in the American foreign-policy playbook: We "cannot be and should not be viewed as [yes, he really said this] the policeman of the world." Cohen's rhetoric was Churchillian, though, compared with that of national security adviser Samuel Berger, who wanted to clear up any confusion about American willingness to respond to humanitarian outrages: "You know, my daughter has a very messy apartment up in college," said Berger sarcastically; "maybe I shouldn't intervene to have that cleaned up." Thus the limits of power, according to Sandy Berger: Don't bother us with dirty laundry, or dead Timorese. ♦

Biased Lead of the Year

Why depend on faxes from the Democratic National Committee, when you can just read the wires?

"BEDFORD, N.H. (AP) Cash won't solve the nation's education problems, but it can help improve the military, according to Texas Gov. George W. Bush." ♦

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Koopiness

Former surgeon general C. Everett Koop has always been a paragon of integrity. How does THE SCRAPBOOK know this? Because that's what the self-described "health conscience of the nation" told THE WEEKLY STANDARD's Matt Labash last summer after the initial public offering of his eponymous Web site, drkoop.com. "When people think of me," said Koop, "they tell me that they think of integrity."

But Koop's reservoir of integrity occasionally runs low. As Labash reported in July, he was profiting from a medical-advice Web site that he barely read, let alone edited, and this after he had sanctimoniously criticized Reagan-administration colleagues for profiting from their time in government.

Last week, several top executives of drkoop.com, including Dr. Integrity himself, fessed up to the embarrassing fact that they had failed to abide by SEC rules for insiders selling stock. The *New York Times* further reported that the Web site was littered with advertising masquerading as expert medical advice, and that Koop's non-profit institute had received a million-dollar grant from a drug company. Koop, for his part, remains infatuated with his image. "I have never been bought," he told the *Times*, "I cannot be bought. I am an icon, and I have a reputation for honesty and integrity."

One of Koop's successors as surgeon general, Joycelyn Elders, had a reputation for extolling the delights of self-love. But it is Koop who would be well-advised to log onto his own Web site, so that he can ask a medical expert whether there's any cure for the solitary vice. ♦

The Hairless Man at the U.S. Open

The hairless man went prime time last week at the U.S. Open, when a newly bare Andre Agassi peeled off his shirt for the apparently adoring crowds. This was not the first such unveiling by Agassi: At the 1993 Wimbledon tournament, he was similarly shorn, giving rise to speculation that then-girlfriend Barbra Streisand perhaps preferred her man not to look like one.

The rise of men without chest hair was analyzed in these very pages by THE WEEKLY STANDARD's David Skinner a few months ago. Prior to the 1990s, shaved and waxed abs were found only among body builders and gay men, that is, two groups who in their own ways distorted manliness to the point of parody. Since then, shaved chests have gone mainstream. Hairless abs, once de rigueur only for male fashion models, have become the norm for Hollywood heartthrobs. It is more than passing strange, Skinner argued, that American male sex symbols should embrace this boyish look.

Even before Agassi bared his chest, it was clear that American men's tennis is in decline. Meanwhile, women's tennis has never been more competitive. Time to grow back your hair, men. ♦

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Casual

Urban Living

His Honor Anthony Williams
Mayor
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Mayor,

Please understand that I have always loved city life. I grew up in a city—well, back in South Dakota in those days, we thought of Pierre as a city, though it didn't have quite 10,000 people and sometimes in the winter the wind would sweep the snow off the plains like a broom and pile it against the houses in long, hard drifts that no one could clear away till spring. But anyway, it was a *complete* place that I grew up in. Not a suburb, not an artificial, parasitic, pseudo-locale, but a real, free-standing entity. A genuine location. A city.

Here at The Weekly Standard, I have friends who don't just live in the suburbs. They *believe* in the suburbs. Their eyes take on the slightly mad glaze of acolytes at the Temple of ChemLawn as they gather in the office and talk about their cul-de-sacs and their sport-utility vehicles and an intricate commuting dispute I haven't quite mastered involving I-66, light rail, the Dulles Airport access road, toll booths, and the merge onto the 14th Street Bridge.

But my wife and I both went to college in Washington, and we were married here in the city as well, in the chapel at Georgetown after graduation. And though our suburban friends looked at us with the suddenly strained smiles of people who've just heard their neighbor at the church picnic mention that he's thinking about taking up Satan worship, we held firm in our declaration that we wanted real urban life when we moved back to Washington almost two years ago.

First we tried the Georgetown neighborhood. I think I thought it would make me feel young again to live near campus. Mostly it made me feel old. And then we tried Mt. Pleasant, up above Adams-Morgan, between 16th Street and Rock Creek, on a cross-street called Park Road.

You know Park Road, don't you, Mr. Mayor? It's one of the neighborhood streets that have been torn up for a year now. A year. Think

Kevin Chadwick

about that. For a year, we've lived on a corner, in a major American metropolis, with dirt roads on both sides. The big trucks come out once a week to dump a load of gravel. Then the little trucks come to haul it away. Then the big trucks come again. Then the little trucks. Most of the rest of the time, nothing happens. It's true that last month the workmen did show up to pour some concrete. But a week later they took the jackhammers and tore it up again.

Early this summer, we received a notice that our water would be shut off on a Wednesday to fix the water main. It wasn't. But the next Tuesday it was. And then the workmen couldn't get the pipe fixed, but that was okay because for a day or two, we were told, we could get our water from a green plastic hose running up out of the manhole, along the gutter, down the sidewalk, across the yard, into the outside garden-hose faucet, and up—backwards through our pipes—to the kitchen sink. So we did get our water this way. For four weeks. I won't tell you what happened with the natural-gas line the bulldozer gashed open; it would only make you want to move out to the suburbs.

Does no one complain that the little, triangular park at Mt. Pleasant Street and Park Road has been torn up on all three sides for a year? The children in the neighborhood have a game they play. They take the gray wooden planks the workmen left in the park three months ago and lay them across the holes the workmen dug four months ago. Then they balance on the planks, swaying and laughing and sometimes falling in. The holes are three feet deep and filled with green rainwater, breeding the angry mosquitoes that swarm up in the evenings. The wind sweeps the red dust of the local clay against the houses in long, hard drifts that no one can clear away.

Please save me. I'm being driven out—out to the land of the endless conversations about sport-utility vehicles and county assessments. The tract homes and the cul-de-sacs. The housing developments named after the features of the landscape destroyed to build them: Orchard Estates, Rolling Hills Park, Shady Groves. The churches constructed at that moment in 1971 when Bauhaus modernism had staged a hostile takeover of cinder-block functionalism. The chemical lawns and the gas barbecues. The swimming pools. The swimming pool cleaning equipment. The lawn furniture. Please, Mr. Mayor. Please finish working on my street.

Sincerely yours,

J. Bottum

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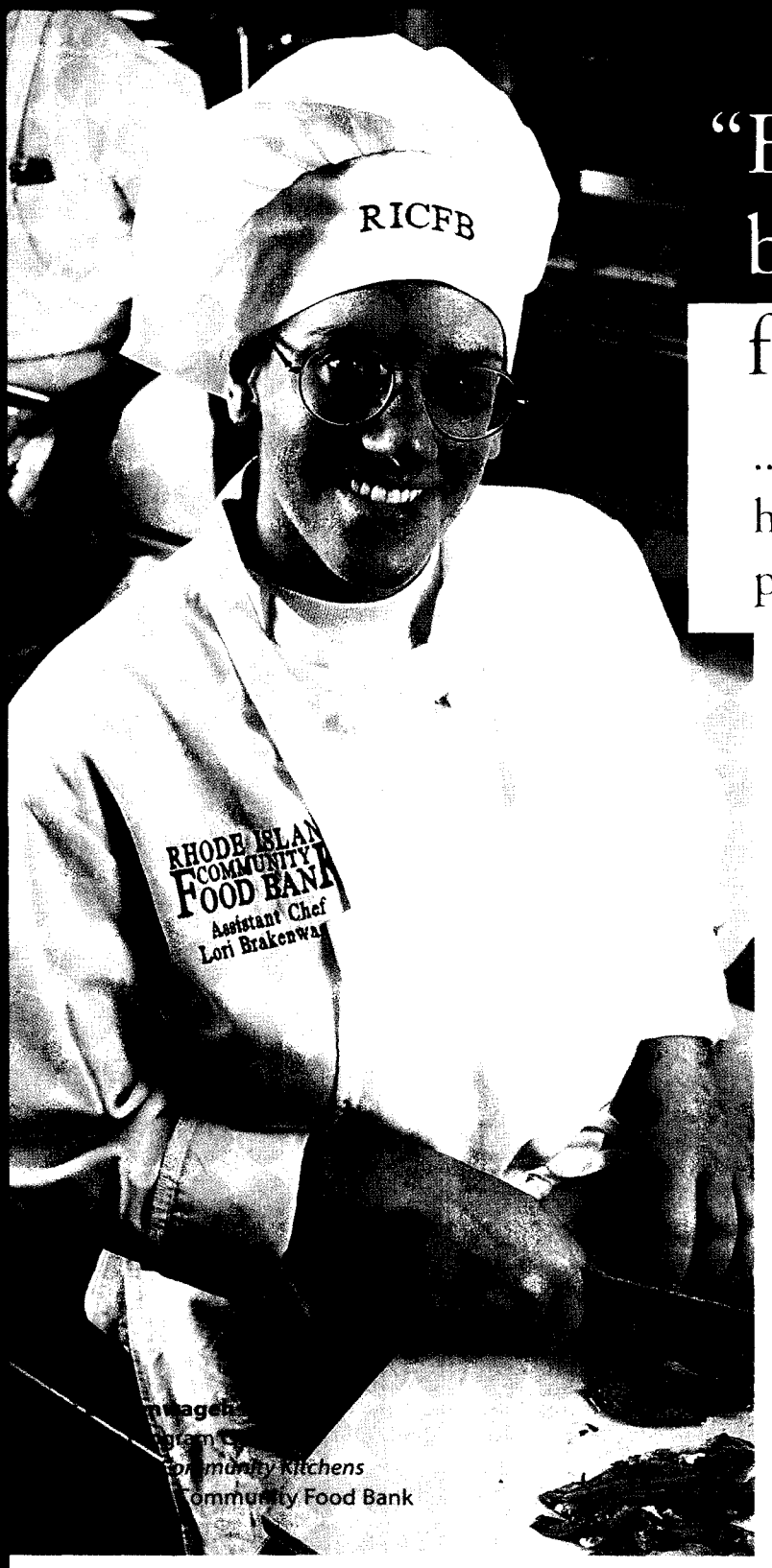

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No Doubting Thomas

Andrew Peyton Thomas's article on Clarence Thomas was outstanding in many ways ("America's Leading Conservative," Aug. 30/Sept. 6). Thomas's knowledge of law, his scholarship in researching Justice Thomas's history of opinions, and his ability to explain why Justice Thomas could very well be America's leading conservative, all combined to make a cohesive and intelligent piece.

My only point of contention with Thomas would be in his omission of fact with respect to Justice Thomas's faith. Justice Thomas did indeed leave the Catholic Church as a seminarian. Thomas seems to indicate that this decision "proves" Justice Thomas's independence of thought and autonomy. Where this implication falls apart is in the recent history of Justice Thomas; he returned to the Catholic Church in 1996 after 28 years. (Supposedly, one of the triggering events was his attendance at the Mass of Ordination for Justice Antonin Scalia's son.)

All in all, though, a great article, and just the high quality I've come to expect from The Weekly Standard.

Paul Nowak
Denver, CO

Andrew Peyton Thomas's article on Justice Clarence Thomas was marred by a noteworthy omission bearing on the quality of his judicial performance, as distinct from his ideological purity. A properly conservative assessment of any judge should give at least as much attention to the quality and integrity of his legal analyses as it does to the results he reaches.

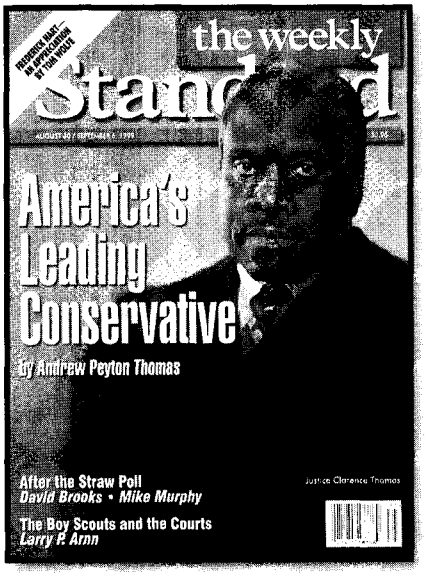
In any account of Thomas's judicial performance, space should certainly have been found for a discussion of his dissenting opinion in the term limits case *U.S. Term Limits* v. *Thornton* (1995). Writing for himself, Chief Justice Rehnquist, and Justices O'Connor and Scalia, Thomas produced a brilliant 80-page argument for the textual and structural centrality of state power to the composition of national government, making a powerful case that neither history nor constitutional language supports the five-member majority's ruling that the people of a state cannot impose term limits on candidates for Congress. Whether one agrees or disagrees with its conclusion, the opinion is a remarkable demonstration of judicial skill.

Michael W. Schwartz
New York, NY

Scouts' Dishonor

In his article about the New Jersey Supreme Court's ruling against the Boy Scouts of America, Larry P. Arnn misses the point of why the decision is pernicious ("Dishonoring the Boy Scouts," Aug. 30/Sept. 6).

In a pluralistic society such as ours,



there will never be perfect agreement about questions of personal morality, particularly sexual morality and intimate associations. There is still not universal approval, for instance, for religiously or racially mixed marriages, even though no legal impediment to such unions exists. So, regardless of whether one approves or disapproves of the Boy Scouts' policy concerning gay members and employees, one should acknowledge their right to engage in expressive conduct that helps fulfill their aim to teach certain values.

The problem with the New Jersey court's ruling is its attempt to establish the principle that the government (in this case the judiciary, but in another case it could be a legislature) can define for a private organization what that organization's beliefs are, and can decide for that organization how it may or may not act on those beliefs. The decision erodes the liberties of everyone—gay or straight, conservative or liberal, believer or nonbeliever—who wishes to associate with people who share certain values, beliefs, or points of view. It extends government power that already dictates whom we may (or may not) employ, what wages we may accept from an employer, which customers we may choose for our products and services, and whom we may marry.

Any court decision that strengthens government at the expense of the individual deserves condemnation. It does not matter whether one favors the views of the Boy Scouts or disagrees with them. Unpopular views deserve protection from government interference; popular views do not need such protection. If we do not stand up for the principle of freedom of association, soon we will see a homogenized civil society, in which every group looks like every other group, and in which robust debate cannot take place because disagreement is forbidden.

Rudy A. Garcia
Vice President, Gays and Lesbians for Individual Liberty
Washington, DC

Comp-Con Conundrum

Professor John DiIulio is right that compassionate conservatism is more than a convenient slogan ("The Political Theory of Compassionate Conservatism," Aug. 23). It is a concept that encapsulates for our time the necessary political combination of liberty and fraternity: A government that is limited yet compassionate responds to our deep need for both personal autonomy and social solidarity. He is also correct that the operational principle of compassionate conservatism is subsidiarity, and its instantiation in our constitutional system is federalism. As Adam Smith observed, the spirit of benevolence is much more likely to operate at short distances.

DiIulio is less persuasive, however, in suggesting that a program, however laudable, by which the federal government itself enlists churches and other mediating institutions to pursue charitable pur-

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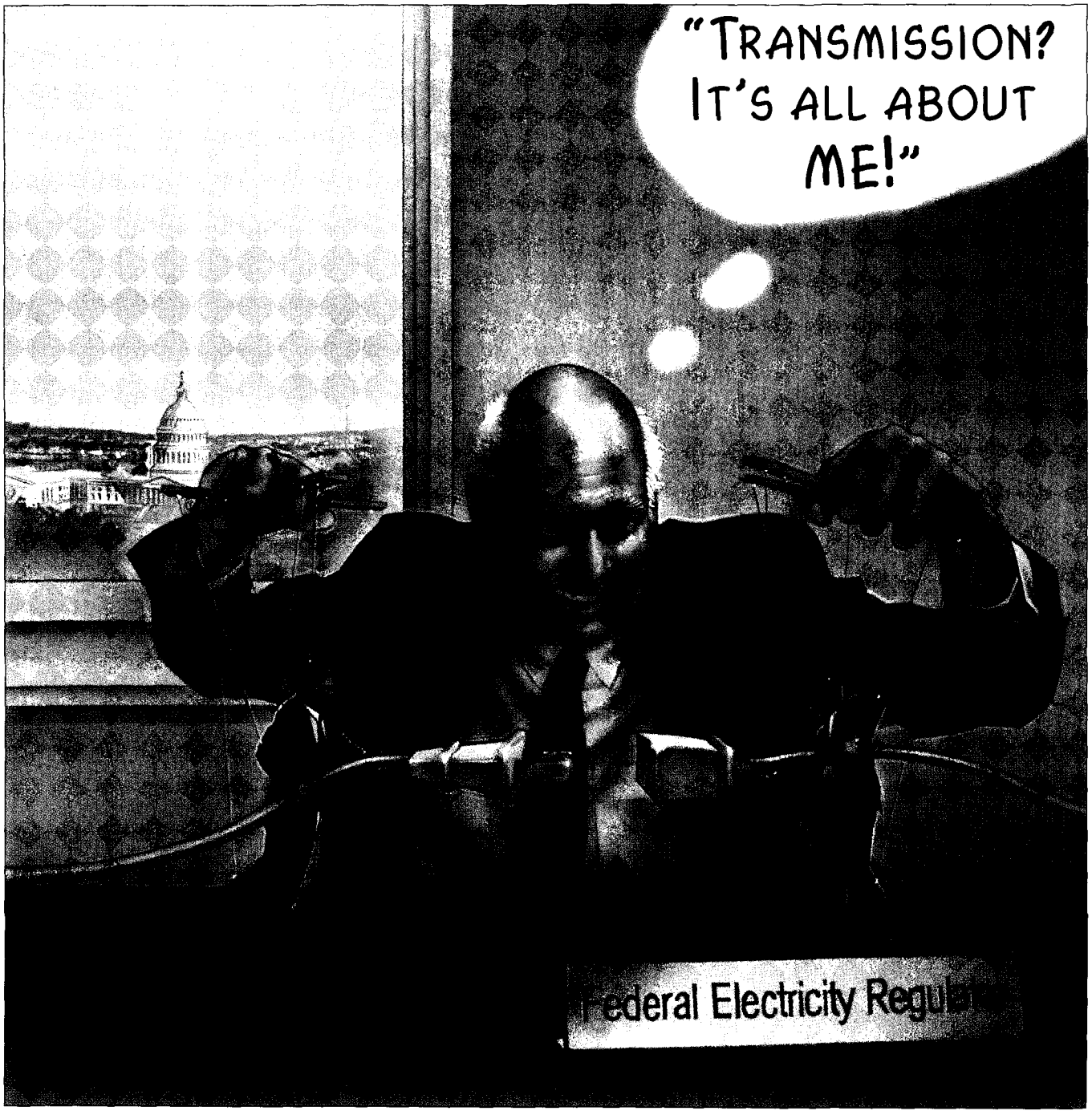
TRANSMISSION — WHO'LL PULL THE STRINGS?

MEET THE REGULATOR



Congress is on the verge of handing vast and unfettered new authority over America's vital electricity transmission system to little-known and often unaccountable federal regulatory agency — the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The bloating of this agency into the unchecked ruler of the nation's electricity grid should be alarming to all.

FERC's new empire will be composed of regional transmission organizations (RTOs), entities that will control transmission and even the distribution of electricity. FERC will decide how many RTOs to create... what these RTOs look like... who is in them... how they will be governed... what they will do and when they will do it. Utilities of all types and sizes will be forced into strange transmission constellations by regulatory fiat... with little chance for appeal. More importantly, the States will be pushed to the sidelines!

Congress should instead consider measures which encourage the voluntary formation of RTOs and seek a market-based solution... not more heavy-handed federal intervention. Unleashing a torrent of federal regulation in the name of "deregulation" dishonors the goals of consumer choice and market competition.

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poses revives subsidiarity or the Framers' federalism. True subsidiarity creates a chain of institutions in which the smallest are empowered by the slightly larger, like towns and cities, not the national government. Likewise, the original doctrine of enumerated powers would have put the states, not the federal government, in charge of relief to the poor.

This is no mere metaphysical dispute. Constitutional federalism put states in competition, encouraging each to come up with effective and innovative solutions. That competition generated real devolution to even smaller units and mediating institutions.

Presently, in contrast, at the federal level interest groups unrestrained by competition are likely to impose restrictions and mandates that serve themselves rather than the poor. Therefore, compassionate conservatism needs to devise constitutive structures appropriate to our time that will again restrain the federal government and unleash the beneficence of civil society.

JOHN O. MCGINNIS
New York, NY

TORT REFORM REDUX

I WANT TO COMMEND Jay Lefkowitz for his article "A Modest Tort Proposal" (Aug. 16). It is evident that our tort law system needs repair. The current system has cost too many jobs and too much money, with the principal beneficiaries being the lawyers on both sides of the counsel table—not the injured parties.

Over the past two decades, Congress has struggled with numerous tort reform bills. The 105th Congress finally passed a comprehensive package, but, after much negotiation with the administration, the president vetoed the bill. Because the reforms were extremely broad in scope, some of the provisions drew controversy that could not be overcome.

Yet, I believe that we finally have the opportunity to pass an important tort reform proposal in the 106th Congress. I recently introduced H.R. 2005, the Workplace Goods Job Growth and Competitiveness Act of 1999. This bill is a modest tort proposal that deals with only one aspect of the law—the issue of liability for injury caused by overage workplace equipment. H.R. 2005 addresses the problem of longtail liability by establishing an 18-year statute of repose for durable goods.

In many cases, decades-old or obsolete workplace goods have been resold and subsequently modified without the original manufacturer's knowledge or control. Factory-installed safety devices are often removed by the new purchasers to increase efficiency—an event that cannot be regulated by the original manufacturer. As a result, liability claims for injuries that occur during the use of these products have proven to be complicated and potentially endless.

A 1998 survey by the Association for Manufacturing Technology finds that almost half of the product liability lawsuits brought against U.S. machine tool manufacturers involve overage equipment. This is not a problem faced by our Asian and European competitors because of well-established 10-year statutes of repose in those countries and because of their more recent entry into the U.S. market. Of course, the American machine tool industry is the foundation of our manufacturing economy, providing essential products and thousands of crucial jobs. In fact, sales of workplace equipment are considered to be a leading indicator of economic growth, and continued industry competitiveness is essential to healthy economic expansion.

H.R. 2005 is identical to the statute of repose contained in the product liability legislation that passed in the 105th Congress, and it is the end result of years of negotiation between the Congress as a whole and the White House. Its enactment will improve the competitiveness of U.S. durable goods manufacturers and invigorate job growth in this important segment of our economy. H.R. 2005 is a modest but important first step.

STEVE CHABOT
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
(R-OH)
Washington, DC

HART AND SOUL

I AM WRITING to thank THE WEEKLY STANDARD for running Tom Wolfe's essay on the work of recently deceased sculptor Frederick Hart ("An American Sculptor," Aug. 30/Sept. 6). Reading it prompted me to return to the National Cathedral for another look at Hart's masterpiece, *Ex Nihilo*.

As I live in the neighborhood, I strolled over one Saturday evening to study the piece. How fine it is! The movement and dramatic action reminded me of the Bernini sculptures I saw in Rome many years ago. What I liked best, however, was seeing its themes repeated and refined in the associated statues of Peter and Paul.

In *Ex Nihilo*, a great whirlwind of creation spills forth human beings. It seems a mighty wind—the divine breath—is blowing across the land and creating life. The two apostles, located below and to the sides of *Ex Nihilo*, also seem caught in the great wind. Each is shown when he first encountered the Lord—Peter by the Sea of Galilee and Paul on the road to Damascus. For each man, the encounter was a life-changing event; nothing was the same thereafter. Hart depicted each man caught in a powerful wind that blows his clothing and ruffles his hair. The same God, the same mighty force that created the human race, "re-created" each man at the moment of his conversion. The symmetry between divine creation and divine redemption is a powerful idea, and it is beautifully rendered by Hart.

It is a wonderful legacy for him to have left to the city of Washington.

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Washington, DC

• • •

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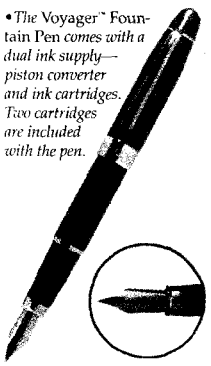

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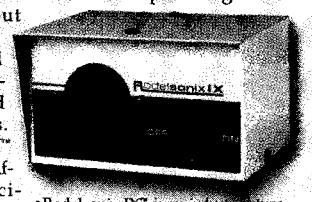

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the weekly Standard

Not Clinton Is Not Enough

There it was, right on the front page of the *Washington Post* two days after Labor Day: "Clinton-Weary Public Has Doubts About Gore." And right under the headline, a pie chart with the percentage breakdown: Bush 56 percent, Gore 37 percent, undecided or neither 7 percent.

From GOP offices on Capitol Hill to Republican-leaning lobbying firms on K Street to conservative think tanks downtown, waves of relief and satisfaction and chortling swept over our nation's capital. Relief, because Bush's not-so-strong showing in the Iowa straw poll, followed by his not-so-deft handling of the cocaine question, turned out not to have hurt him at all. Satisfaction, because the Republican establishment's investment in Governor Bush seemed to be paying off in the almost foreordained nomination of an almost foreordained winner for 2000. And chortling because even though Clinton had slipped the impeachment noose, "Clinton fatigue" seemed to be crippling his vice president's chances of succeeding him.

If Bill Bradley is the Democratic nominee, then Clinton-fatigue disappears as a reason for voters to favor Bush in the general election.

Of course, the savvy politicos and experienced fundraisers and wise policy wonks cautioned each other: "It's early yet; 14 months is a long time; anything can still happen; we can't be overconfident." Still, they *are* pretty confident. And after Bush '92 and Dole '96, one almost wants to let them enjoy their good cheer for a little while. But, as Bush '92 might have said, that wouldn't be prudent. There are three solid reasons for caution. They can be summarized as Bradley, Buchanan, and East Timor.

Bradley. Clinton fatigue, and Al Gore's own ham-handedness as a candidate, are damaging the vice president. The trouble is, Bill Bradley is now just as likely as Gore to be the Democratic nominee against whom George W. Bush, or any other Republican, will have to run. It's true that Gore leads Bradley by 69 percent to 24 percent in the *Washington Post*-ABC News poll. But we nominate presidents in a state-by-state process, not in a national primary. And two recent polls have Bradley within 7 points and 4 points respectively of Gore in New Hampshire, the state where both men have spent the most time and voters have had the best chance to size them up. More important, one of those polls has Bradley running a closer race than Gore against Bush.

If Bush is still beating Gore handily at the end of the year in surveys, and if it seems plausible—as it may well—that Bradley would be a stronger general-election candidate, the movement among Democrats to Bradley in January and February could be dramatic. And if Bradley can run close behind Gore in Iowa and upset him in New Hampshire, he has a good chance of beating him in New York and California on March 7 and winning the nomination. Throw in an attractive vice presidential pick like Nebraska senator Bob Kerrey, or perhaps a non-political business or civic leader type, and suddenly Clinton fatigue disappears as a reason for voters to favor Bush in the general election. Bradley, too, is not Clinton. Indeed, Bush would have to worry about Lott-Hastert fatigue, while Bradley would sail into the general election with real strength.

Buchanan. Bradley will be especially strong if the general election is a three-way race, not a two-way race, and if the third way is Reform party candidate Patrick Buchanan. When Buchanan is included in polls today, he reduces Bush's lead over Gore by about 6 points. An aggressive Buchanan campaign over the next year could do even more damage to Bush. Imagine if Pat hammers away at Bush for refusing to commit himself to overturning *Roe* v. *Wade* through judicial appointments; imagine then that Bush seeks to placate Buchanan, or is seen by the press to seek to placate Buchanan, by, say, passing over pro-choice Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge as his running mate and selecting a pro-life vice presidential nominee. This would allow Bradley, or Gore, to whiplash Bush as a puppet of the intolerant Right and to win over some of those Clinton-weary independents who are now inclined to Bush's com-

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passionate conservatism. And this is to say nothing of what could happen in a three-way Bush-Buchanan-Bradley debate in 2000. In other words: The dynamics of a Buchanan candidacy could be even more dangerous to Bush than the polls now suggest.

East Timor. There is presumably not much George W. Bush or any other Republican can do about Bradley or Buchanan. But there is something Bush can do about the third threat to his victory in November 2000: He has yet really to explain why he deserves to be president of the United States.

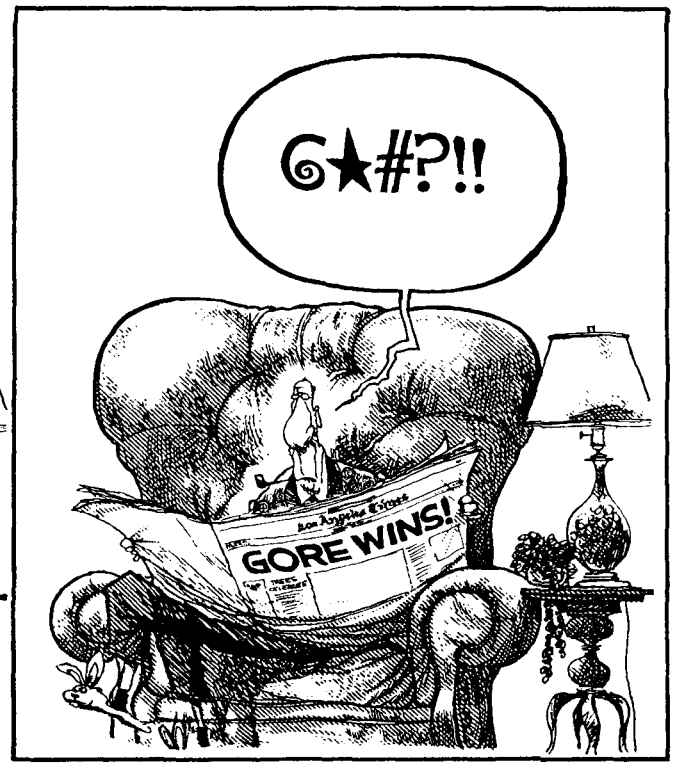
It's true that it is still early. It's true that Bush has so far dodged any damage from his minor "East Timorean"-type gaffes. It's true that the charge that Bush is not quite up to being president has so far gained little traction. This is partly because Clinton has lowered expectations for the presidency, and partly because Bush seems perfectly capable of doing the job if current conditions of peace and prosperity continue. But will they? Unexpected things will happen over the course of the next year. They will tend especially to happen abroad. For example, who would have predicted a month ago that an American president might soon have to decide whether to send troops to East Timor?

The more dangerous the world comes to look, the more obvious it will be that the next president will have to make serious, life and death decisions about where to stake U.S. credibility and commit U.S. troops. By November 2000, the American public will be reminded that, while a candidate's education proposals are important, they are not dispositive as to whether he should be president. A president's judgment about war and peace is fundamental. When Ohio senator Mike DeWine endorsed John McCain for president recently, he said, "This is the man who in my opinion should be commander in chief." When Bob Kerrey explained last week why he was supporting Bill Bradley, he said, "I think he'll make an exceptional commander in chief."

It is striking that George W. Bush's many supporters have not conspicuously made this claim on his behalf. This is understandable; Bush has been a governor, and he has not yet been under great pressure as a candidate to speak as a potential commander in chief. But to lay proper claim to the office he seeks, he will need to begin doing so.

George W. Bush has been able to move out to a huge lead in the polls and in fund-raising mostly because he is (1) governor of our second largest state, (2) President Bush's son, (3) a charming and engaging guy, (4) not Newt Gingrich, and above all (5) not Bill Clinton. None of these reasons is to Bush's discredit. But to justify the high hopes and great confidence that have been placed in him by Republicans in Washington and around the country, he needs to add another reason: He needs to demonstrate that (6) he has the character and ability and judgment and convictions to be a strong president. Bush will win if voters believe he deserves to win. He will only deserve to win if he is more than not Bill Clinton.

—William Kristol



Michael Ramirez

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Marital Monkey Business

The Left comes up with a new family politics—at once pro-parent and anti-marriage. **BY PIA NORDLINGER**

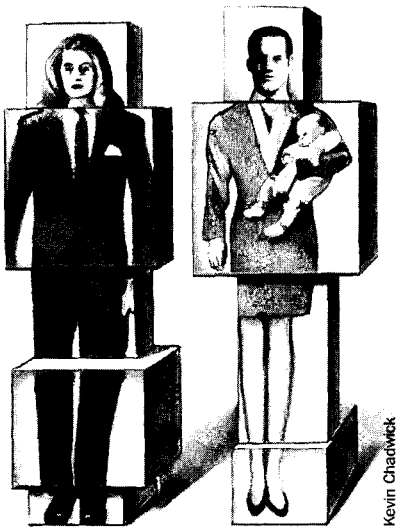
THE CULTURAL LEFT IS TIRED of getting beat up for being anti-family. So, a small but influential number of academics, social critics, and policy types have come up with a new gambit: They are anti-marriage but pro-parenthood.

They are pro-parenthood because they are unable any longer to deny that parents are important to the well-being of children. They are anti-marriage because they are deeply committed to denying any privileged status to the traditional family, with its two parents of opposite sexes who are married to each other.

Parents, according to this new line of thought, can be single, divorced, married, "cohabiting," gay, lesbian, whatever. The result will be the same, provided that they are committed to the child; children need parents, but the existence and nature of any commitment *to each other* is beside the point.

This argument recently attracted attention when *American Psychologist* published "Deconstructing the Essential Father," a study that attempted to prove that "a wide variety of family structures can support positive child outcomes." The authors, Louise B. Silverstein and Carl F. Auerbach, professors at Yeshiva University, were candid about their intentions: "We do not believe that the data support the conclusion that fathers are essential to child well-being and that heterosexual marriage is the social context in which responsible fathering is most likely to occur."

Public policy that favors the traditional family, Silverstein and Auerbach argue, "discriminates against cohabiting couples, single mothers, and gay and lesbian parents." The



Kevin Chadwick

authors are therefore "interested in encouraging public policy that supports the legitimacy of diverse family structures, rather than policy that privileges the two-parent heterosexual, married family."

Fundamental to their argument is the belief that there is nothing unique to mothering or fathering. Therefore, men and women are interchangeable in their relationship to children. As evidence, Silverstein and Auerbach cite the apparently exemplary behavior of marmosets, the South American monkeys. "Male marmosets behave like full-time mothers." Which is possible, they explain, because marmosets live in a "bioecological context" which allows men to act as primary caregivers. So, if humans would just expand their bioecological contexts, they would find that two men can parent as well as two women, as well as one woman, as well as a cohabiting man and woman, as well as a married man and woman.

Throughout their work, Silverstein and Auerbach attack the fatherhood movement and the "neoconservative" belief that absentee fathers are responsible for a host of social ills. David Blankenhorn, author of *Fatherless America*, and David Popenoe, who wrote *Life Without Father*, are repeatedly denounced for spreading this "dramatic oversimplification." In their attempt to correct our understanding, the Yeshiva professors detail the "potential costs of father presence." Fathers in one study they cite spent all the family's money on gambling, booze, and cigarettes, and, as a result, the wayward men "actually increased women's workload and stress level."

But, while "Deconstructing the Essential Father" may be regarded as propaganda, it should not be dismissed. "Ten years ago, it would have been laughable," says Wade Horn, president and founder of the National Fatherhood Initiative. "Today it is dangerous." According to Popenoe, director of the National Marriage Project, "This is the new theme emerging from the left. They want to move from a marriage contract to a parenting contract."

Examples are plentiful. Anthony Giddens, director of the London School of Economics and Political Science and policy adviser to prime minister Tony Blair, argues that we might as well give up on marriage. In his book *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, he writes, "The proportion of children born outside marriage probably won't decline, and lifelong sexual partnerships will almost certainly become increasingly uncommon. Contractual commitment to a child could thus be separated from marriage, and made by

Pia Nordlinger is an editorial writer at the New York Post.

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each parent as a binding matter of law, with unmarried and married fathers having the same rights and the same obligations."

The critic Barbara Ehrenreich floats a similar notion in *Harper's* magazine. Asked for "a picture of the future," Ehrenreich responded, "In my utopia I would expect that marriage would change a lot. Couples would make a contract, not with each other, because I think these relationships don't last forever, but make a contract to be co-parents forever. I think we might formalize that and maybe make some beautiful ceremonies around the co-parenting contract."

So, if marriages are doomed anyway, why bother trying? Why not replace the "outmoded" concept of marriage with a more convenient contractual arrangement?

Because nothing gives a child more advantages than two married parents who live under the same roof. Cohabitation, separation, and any situation in which adults would need a "parenting contract" precludes the very best option for kids. The assumption that parenting contracts could somehow replace marriage is wholly unrealistic. As Wade Horn points out, there are not simply one or two areas in which the benefits of a traditional family are observable: These benefits are present "on every single measure of child well-being."

For example, married parents do the best job of protecting a child from poverty. In 1995, only 10 percent of children under 18 in families with two married parents lived in poverty. Contrast that with the 50 percent who lived with an unmarried mother. Numerous studies have found that, without fathers, young boys are more likely to engage in criminal activity and girls to engage in early sexual activity. Other measurable areas—education, physical health, emotional health, substance abuse—all favor the family with two married parents.

If so, then wouldn't a parenting contract be an improvement on the all-too-common situation in which one parent is totally uninvolved? "In principle, a parenting contract is not a bad idea," says Lionel Tiger in a phone interview. "At least you're ahead of 'Okay, we've had sex, see you later.' Any contract is an element of social control." Which raises a crucial question.

How would a parenting contract be enforced? If the contract were no more than a handshake, sticking to it would be a matter of individual honor—not exactly money in the bank. Anthony Giddens suggests that co-parenting arrangements could be made a matter of law, but, as he acknowledges, "enforcing parenthood contracts wouldn't be without its problems." So, "other modes of seeking to balance risk and responsibility could also be instituted."

What kind of parents will we have if men and women are not following the desire to nurture their own, but carrying out government-enforced obligations? Parenting contracts are just a clever way to liberate adults from commitments.

But what kind of parents will we have if men and women are not following the desire to nurture their own, but carrying out government-enforced obligations? As Harvey Mansfield, professor of government at Harvard, puts it, such an artificial arrangement would not be "strong enough on a day-to-day basis. Who's going to take the child to the park?"

Ultimately, parenting contracts are a clever way to liberate adults from commitments made before God, the law, and one's friends and family. Instead of marriage, which would best suit the needs of a child, parents can make up their own rules, tell themselves to abide by them, and justify it all with theories that say the kids will turn out all right in the end.

Liberation-minded lefties are not alone in this effort to disengage marriage from parenting. In a recent article in the *American Enterprise*, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe warn that the fatherhood movement, in which both authors have played major roles, has been drifting in the direction of marriage-free parenthood. The movement has been coopted by fathers' rights activists, government-funded programs, and advocates for low-income dads, all of whom are sympathetic to the divorce culture that Whitehead and Popenoe have lamented. Under these new influences, the movement now promotes so-called responsible fatherhood.

This amounts to helping divorced and unwed fathers who are separated from their children become involved in their lives. It is parenthood without any nagging about the importance of marriage. "Responsible fatherhood," Whitehead and Popenoe make clear, "is daddy defined down to his minimum legal requirements: a name on a birth certificate, a signature on a child support check, some unspecified expression of emotional care—a birthday card, weekends together, whatever. Call it daddy lite."

This of course would suit Silverstein and Auerbach just fine. Consider one of their stated goals: "Social policy is needed that removes the impediments to paternal involvement for never-married and divorced fathers. Rather than privileging the institution of heterosexual marriage at the expense of other family structures, it is essential to strengthen the father-child bond within all family contexts, especially non-married contexts."

But the inconvenient fact remains that children benefit from married "contexts." After all, the human family is a bit more intricate than the marmoset household. ♦

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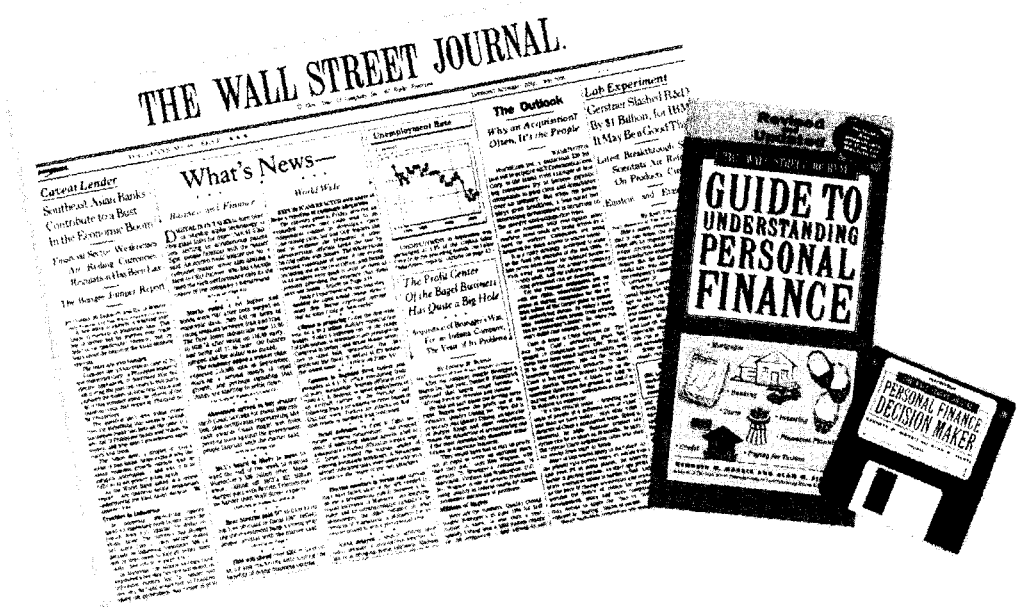

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Country Club Democrats

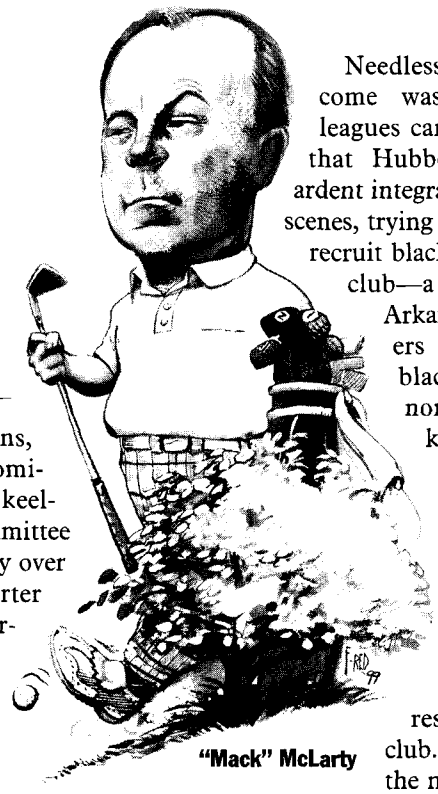
A tale of moral dudgeon and posturing in the Clinton era. BY SAM DEALEY

A BULLETIN from the Country Club of Little Rock brings word that one of its new members is former Clinton White House chief of staff Thomas "Mack" McLarty. This might ordinarily pass unnoticed, but McLarty is not precisely a *new* member, and the Country Club of Little Rock is not your ordinary hangout for the well-heeled: It was the backdrop for an early episode of Clinton-era moral posturing that turns out, in McLarty's case anyway, to have reached its expiration date.

For a modest $25,000 fee and about $2,000 a year in dues, members of the club, nestled on a bluff overlooking the Arkansas River, can swim, play tennis, and play golf on a sprawling 18-hole, par 70 bent-grass course. There's no denim, and no shirts without collars. And there used to be no blacks.

But then candidate Clinton came under fire in March 1992 for playing golf at the club with 13-year member Webster Hubbell. Nine months later, the club found itself embracing its first—and apparently only—black member: economist Howard Curtis Reed. Rest assured, the reception was brief. Reed soon enjoyed the further good fortune of landing a job in Washington under then U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor.

But that didn't end the embarrassment the club's monochromatic membership would cause Bill Clinton and his hometown friends. When Hubbell was set to appear before the Senate Judiciary Committee in early 1993 for confirmation as associate attorney general, it was payback time for Republicans, whose judicial nominees had been keelhauled by that committee with some regularity over the preceding quarter century for membership in exclusive clubs. This was usually hypocritical mau-mauing of men whose only character flaw was not bigotry but a fondness for golf. Still the issue had been potent enough to give rise to a Judiciary Committee rule, which holds that it is inappropriate for nominees to belong to a discriminatory organization unless they "actively engaged in a bona fide effort" to end exclusive membership rules.



"Mack" McLarty

As recently as two years before Hubbell's date with the committee, in March 1991, Florida judge Kenneth Ryskamp, a Bush federal appeals court appointee, had been crucified by the committee's Democrats for waiting until a week before his confirmation hearing to resign from the WASPy Riviera Club in Coral Gables, Fla. Ryskamp's nomination was rejected, to the tune of moral preening by the likes of Sen. Edward Kennedy: "I'm concerned whether someone can have an open mind in the courthouse and a closed mind in the country club." Kennedy and many of his Democratic colleagues who rejected Ryskamp—Joe Biden, Howard Metzenbaum, Dennis DeConcini, Patrick Leahy, Howell Heflin, Paul Simon, and Herbert Kohl—were still running the committee at the time of Hubbell's hearings.

Needless to say, the outcome was different. Colleagues came forward to say that Hubbell had been an ardent integrationist behind the scenes, trying without success to recruit black members for the club—a claim that left Arkansas NAACP leaders and at least one black state legislator nonplussed. "I don't know how much of an effort [Hubbell made], how important this was to him," said state representative William Walker. Still, Hubbell announced his resignation from the club. "There remains in the minds of some people the perception that my continued membership in the club reflects some lack of sensitivity," he piously said.

And that wasn't all. Just hours later, three other senior White House officials who were members of the Little Rock club—chief of staff Thomas "Mack" McLarty, and White House counsels Vince Foster and William Kennedy—also resigned. Solidarity! This ritual sacrifice by Hubbell's colleagues did the trick. His nomination was approved by the Judiciary committee. And what a painless sacrifice it turned out to be. After all, who wants to play golf in Little Rock, when the finest courses of the Washington, D.C., area are at your disposal?

And now, it turns out, the grand gesture of moral high principle is revocable. After his stint at the White House, McLarty opened up shop back in Little Rock. And where best to conduct business? In the Country Club of Little Rock, to which he again belongs.

Howard Reed, too, has returned to Little Rock, though it may be news to that city's country clubbers. Active members say they've yet to see Reed on the veranda, eating lobster thermidor and sipping gin. ♦

Illustration by Fred Harper

Sam Dealey is a reporter for The Hill.

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Get Influential

Senator Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., questioning J. Michael Heyman, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, at a budget hearing:

"I am confident that you are familiar with an article from the June 7 edition of THE WEEKLY STANDARD entitled 'The National Museum of Multiculturalism.' [After reading it] I spent the better part of a morning walking around the museum myself. . . . I want you to know that the article did generate a good deal of discussion among a number of Senators."

—Senate Rules Committee Hearing, July 28, 1999

Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard, D-Calif., on Title IX:

"Let me quote a recent article in the latest edition of THE WEEKLY STANDARD . . ."

Congressional Record, Monday, July 26, 1999

Rep. Steny H. Hoyer, D-Md., on events in the Balkans:

"We see that the credibility of the United States has been enhanced throughout the world. As William Kristol and Robert Kagan wrote recently in THE WEEKLY STANDARD . . ."

Congressional Record, Tuesday, June 22, 1999

Rep. Frank R. Wolf, R-Va., on Kosovo:

"I agree with the words of Bob Kagan in THE WEEKLY STANDARD of March 1, 1999 . . ."

Congressional Record, Tuesday, June 10, 1999

Senator Slade Gorton, R-Wash., before the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee:

"Chester Finn, in a recent article for THE WEEKLY STANDARD, notes that despite pouring $118 billion into Title I over the past three decades . . ."

Congressional Record, Wednesday, February 3, 1999

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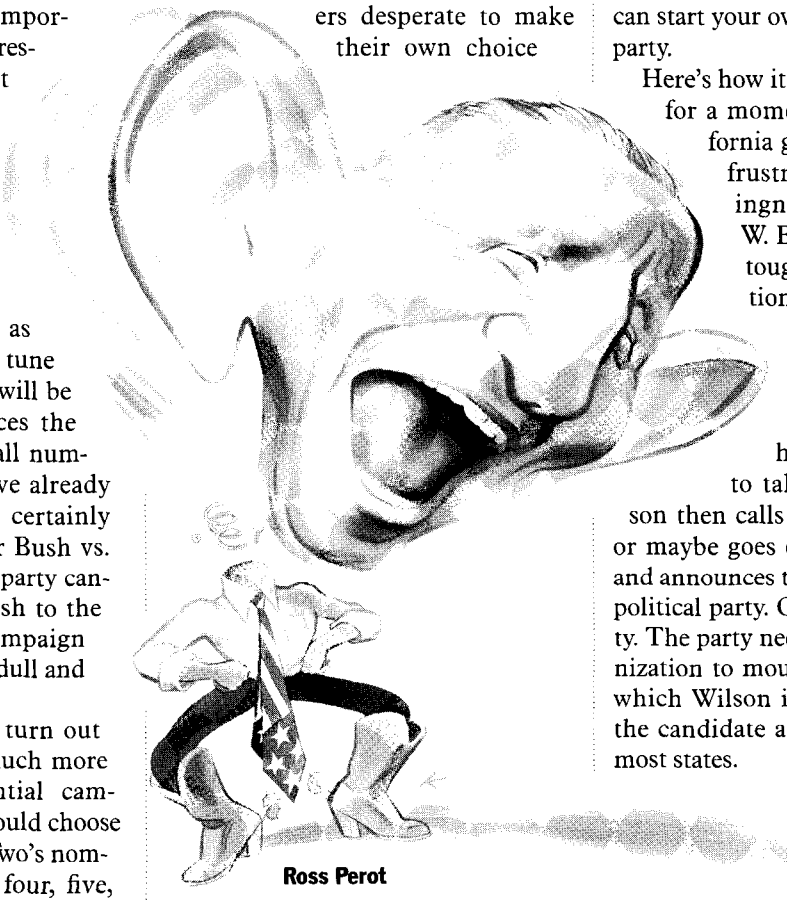
Shortcut to the White House

A scenario for last-minute entrants to shake up the 2000 presidential race. BY BRIAN KENNEDY

THANKS TO THE WAY America's two-party political system has adapted to the ill-conceived campaign-finance reforms of the 1970s, the excitement is being drained from our most important political choice, the presidential election. Almost all the crucial competition now takes place in the realm of fund-raising more than a year before the general election, and before the primaries even start.

Sometime next spring, as a result, when most voters tune in for the first time, they will be presented with the choices the two big parties and a small number of primary voters have already made for them, almost certainly either a Bush vs. Gore or Bush vs. Bradley election. The big-party candidates will then both rush to the center, and the pallid campaign that results is likely to be dull and disappointing.

But it doesn't have to turn out this way. Imagine how much more interesting the presidential campaign would be if voters could choose not just between the Big Two's nominees, but among three, four, five, six, or even seven serious candidates. This is what information-age Americans have come to expect in almost every aspect of their lives except presidential politics: an abundance of choices and the ability to make a selection according to a convenient and suitable schedule. And here's the surprising news: Candidates desperate to have a voice and voters desperate to make their own choice could exploit a loophole in existing campaign-finance law to produce real competition.



Ross Perot

The Republican and Democratic nominees will certainly still have a built-in advantage. Each will receive a federal grant of $70 million for the general election, the result of campaign-finance "reform" that bestows public money on candidates who agree not to spend any other funds in advocating their own election or their opponent's defeat. But with every reform there are loopholes, and campaign financing is no exception. Over the years, the Big Two have perfected the art of promoting their candidates through issue-advocacy advertising, funded by so-called soft-money contributions to political parties. It is this very loophole—soft-money contributions are not regulated—that could throw the presidential election open to serious competition from other candidates as late as next summer. You can't mount a serious run for president as an independent unless you have a personal fortune. But you can start your own soft-money funded party.

Here's how it would work. Suppose for a moment that former California governor Pete Wilson, frustrated by the unwillingness of either George W. Bush or Al Gore to get tough on illegal immigration or push for the abolition of government's use of racial preferences, decides, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore." Wilson then calls a press conference—or maybe goes on *Larry King Live*—and announces the formation of a new political party. Call it the Golden party. The party needs only enough organization to mount a "convention," at which Wilson is nominated, getting the candidate a line on the ballot in most states.

Like most minor-party candidates, Wilson would not be able to raise the funds to match the spending of the Big Two and their government-funded campaigns. Under federal law, he would be limited to asking for contributions of no more than $1,000 per donor. To raise $70 million would mean finding at least 70,000 donors. Not likely to happen.

But the Golden party candidate could still be competitive, because contributions to the Golden party

Brian Kennedy was the national political director of the Lamar Alexander presidential campaign, former chairman of the Republican party of Iowa, and former executive director of the Republican Governors Association.

Illustration by John Kascht

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would not be limited, as they would be to the Wilson for President committee. The party could raise a few million dollars of soft money, from a small number of donors, to get on the fifty state ballots. Then, as recent presidential races have demonstrated, there is no limit to the amount of issue-advocacy advertising the party could air featuring its nominee, as long as the commercial does not expressly advocate his election or the defeat of his opponents. Accordingly, with just a handful of large, unregulated, soft-money contributions, the Golden party could in short order amass, say, a $20 million fund for TV ad buys, enough to make a viable candidate competitive in the general election.

It's not hard to concoct any number of scenarios that could prove upsetting to the major-party candidates. There is already serious talk that the Reform party (which qualifies for $13 million of federal funds because of Ross Perot's past showings) will nominate Pat Buchanan. But that hardly exhausts the possibilities. How about a McCain-Feingold ticket running on the issue of campaign-finance reform? Or maybe a Parents and Schools party, frustrated by the lack of commitment to real education reform, will nominate some ambitious governor. A New Progressive party could run Jesse Jackson or Warren Beatty, demanding the Big Two do more than provide lip service to the problems of urban America. Or the Farmer Labor party might nominate senator Paul Wellstone to illustrate that the Big Two are not dealing seriously with the farm crisis.

Particular candidates aside, who can doubt the appeal to the media—especially if the election looks like a dull one—of a series of new "parties" whose candidates represent a real choice for jaded voters? What's more, these new parties, particularly if they responded to an unforeseen set of political circumstances, could quickly raise astonishing sums of unregulated soft-money. In the final month before the election, thousands of issue-advocacy TV commercials can have a serious impact.

While many potential candidates might not want to jeopardize their chances for a cabinet position under one of the leading candidates, other men and women who have long harbored presidential ambitions would probably be eager to run under such conditions. No longer would such self-starters face the prospect of spending three years running and fund-raising to win the Republican or Democratic party nomination. With far less effort, such a candidate could get himself directly on the ballot for the general election.

With just a handful of large contributions, a third party could buy enough issue ads to make a candidate competitive.

The moment when most voters would realize they have a real choice is the day the debate commission announced the schedule and invitation for "the debates." No longer would the commissioners be able to simply send the standard "Dear Mr. LaRouche" form letter to anyone not nominated by the Big Two. On what basis would the commission include Bush and Gore and yet exclude candidates of national stature whose "parties" are endowed with campaign treasuries of millions of dollars?

It would be a rich irony indeed if, next fall, sixty million viewers tuned in for debates between four, five, or six serious candidates, thanks to a soft-money loophole in our campaign-finance laws that is widely assumed to magnify the power of the two major parties. Yet there's no reason competition and excitement can't be restored to the presidential election under the rules as they are now written. ♦

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National Institute of Cancer Litigation

Why is government research into silicone implants being shaped by trial lawyers? BY JOHN MERONEY

ONE OF THE longest-running and most expensive taxpayer-funded projects at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, has nothing to do with curing cancer.

Since the Bush administration, an epidemiologist named Louise Brinton has been quietly at work on a study of a product that dozens of scientific institutions from Harvard to the Mayo Clinic have confirmed does not cause illness—the silicone breast implant.

Brinton, who is chief of the environmental epidemiology branch of the National Cancer Institute, has adopted an unorthodox approach that is raising scientific eyebrows. Although her study of the long-term health effects of silicone implants won't appear until later this fall, the concerns of her peers seem justified. Documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act confirm that in drawing up procedures for her $4 million project and in recruiting some 13,500 women participants, Brinton collaborated with anti-implant activists, including plaintiffs' lawyers and their paid expert witnesses.

Of course, contact between a scientist and parties with a vested interest in the outcome of a study doesn't automatically slant the result. But the extensive nature of Brinton's associations is curious and ethically questionable, especially since Brinton, who refused several times to be interviewed for this story, is a government official.

John Meroney is associate editor of the American Enterprise.

One plaintiffs' lawyer with whom Brinton has been in contact is LeRoy Hersh of San Francisco, a member of the Plaintiffs' Steering Committee of top lawyers handling implant litigation. Hersh's firm won a $1.7 million settlement against Dow Corning in 1985 in one of the first significant breast implant cases. Since then, Hersh has been hoping new scientific findings would vindicate him and his approximately 400 implant clients. In 1995, Brinton agreed to be a consultant for Hersh, and he wrote to her about the medical condition of at least one of his clients. In one letter, he asked her about a possible "relationship" between implants and cancer. Now, Hersh says Brinton's forthcoming study represents a "chance to come up with a conclusion which we haven't heretofore had."

She later described the session as an opportunity to "consult w/ plaintiff lawyers and silicone victims." Her travel was paid by the government.

Brinton has had even more contact with Stephen Sheller, a tort lawyer in Philadelphia. He arranged for her to appear before two dozen of the most prominent plaintiffs' lawyers in the country in July 1995 at the Manhattan law firm of Weitz & Luxemberg. Brinton made a presentation and disseminated material about her government work. She later described the session as an opportunity to "consult w/ plaintiff lawyers and silicone victims." Her expense report shows that her travel was paid for by the government.

Brinton wrote to Sheller about the July meeting that it had been productive "for us to share ideas" about "how valid data on long-term effects of breast implants could be obtained." Brinton agreed with the attorney that earlier studies were inadequate and thanked him for help in "acquiring the data" needed to "address the full spectrum of diseases possibly associated" with implants. Brinton spent another weekend as a guest of the trial lawyers, in November 1995, this time in Miami, again traveling at government expense. Sheller told Brinton that he and the other lawyers would encourage their clients to cooperate with her study, adding, "I would appreciate your coordinating with me whatever you need us to do to see that a complete, unbiased, effective study is done." One thing is certain: What a plaintiffs' lawyer would consider an "unbiased, effective study" would surely run counter to the scientific findings of the past ten years.

Brinton's involvement with the attorneys extended to permitting them a significant role in shaping the 28-page research questionnaire she sent to the subjects of her study. When she showed them an early draft, the advocacy groups weren't "happy with the questionnaire," Sheller told Brinton. She ought to be more definite about her goal. So Brinton tried to rally the troops: "The study provides an opportunity for women who may be suffering as a result of implants to be heard. Now is your chance," she wrote in a two-page informational document printed on the Department of Health and Human Services letterhead.

For Kenneth Shine, president of the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences, such language signifies an effort to "encourage women with symptoms and problems to enroll" in the study. He told *Science* magazine he believes Brinton should have assiduously

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sought out a sample that included women who were happy with their implants as well as those who weren't.

In addition to attorneys, Brinton has worked with anti-implant activists. She sent a copy of her scientific protocol to the president of American Silicone Implant Survivors, Inc., and asked for "any support [she] could provide" as well as advice on how best to recruit "implant survivors." In the spirit of their feminist assumptions, Brinton's questionnaire asks subjects whether husbands and boyfriends pressured them to have surgery. All in the line of cancer research.

An Internet Web site called God's Silicone Angels (fantasyrealm.net/honeyb/SiliconeAngels), which memorializes women who have allegedly died because of their implants, quotes longtime Naderite Dr. Sidney Wolfe touting Brinton's work as "designed to correct the deficiencies" of previous studies—studies Brinton herself has characterized as corrupted by "special interest monies." And in a conference call with activists on August 15, 1995, Brinton showed her partisanship, describing other studies as "bad science." "We need your help in telling women," she said, "that this one is valid."

Dr. Marcia Angell, editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the author of a book on the breast implant controversy, says that since Brinton has the imprimatur of the National Cancer Institute (where a "multidisciplinary" panel of "national experts" and "consumer representatives" advises her and oversees her work), her results may "open it all up again"—"it" being the scientific and legal controversy that has simmered for a decade. Plaintiffs who haven't already settled their cases will be able to claim they have new evidence from the federal government on their side. LeRoy Hersh says this would be welcome news: "Women will finally know they aren't crazy." Lawyers on the manufacturers' side, meanwhile, are bracing for the worst. One predicts privately that Brinton's report will associate implants with amorphous symptoms like fatigue, dry eyes, depression, and sore knees. "That's the kind of thing any woman might have," says the attorney, which would be almost impossible to disprove.

Louise Brinton's work should give credence to those in Congress pushing for greater public access to internal documents relating to federally funded scientific research. But regardless of the outcome of Brinton's study, her style is clearly unique.

"It's a question of conflict of interest," says Dr. Robert Capizzi, chairman of the Department of Medicine at Thomas Jefferson Medical College. Capizzi, who is one of the top oncologists in the country, follows the work of the National Cancer Institute closely. "Plaintiffs' lawyers have an ax to grind," he says, "and what Brinton has done is very unusual." ♦

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Courting the Black Vote

Bill Bradley talks an awful lot about race, but so far he's made hardly a dent in Gore's support.

By Matthew Rees

When Bill Bradley kicked off his presidential campaign last week in his hometown of Crystal City, Missouri, he recalled that his Little League baseball team had walked out of restaurants in a southeastern Missouri town that wouldn't serve the team because its catcher and left fielder were black. "Racism disturbed me then," he said, "and still angers me now." Later, he asked, "Isn't it just common sense that we . . . do what it takes to achieve racial unity?" He concluded his speech with a promise that for the duration of the campaign he would "urge Americans to bridge the divide of prejudice."

The surprise here wasn't that Bradley talked about race three times, but that he didn't talk about it more. Regardless of the audience, Bradley is prone to launch into discourses on a variety of race-related issues, and he's always sure to mention that one of the reasons he decided to run for president was to promote racial reconciliation. Visit his Web site (billbradley.com) and you'll find only three speeches from his 18-year Senate career, and all three are devoted to race.

This may seem an odd platform on which to run a presidential campaign, particularly at a time when the black unemployment rate is lower than ever before and magazines like *Newsweek* are writing articles about how it's "a great time—the best time ever—to be black in America." But as a tactical matter, emphasizing race is smart politics. Blacks will be between 20 percent and 40 percent of the Democratic electorate in early primary states like South Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, New York, Michigan, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. If Bradley can make inroads among the black voters of these states, his chances of knocking off Al Gore will improve considerably.

So far, though, he's striking out. While a survey published last month by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington found 41 percent of blacks viewing Bradley favorably, and just 11 percent viewing him unfavorably, the survey's more noteworthy finding was that 42 percent of black respondents didn't know who Bradley was. "I don't know of much support for the former senator in the black community," says John Conyers, a veteran black congressman from Detroit. This may change, of course, assuming Bradley remains a viable candidate over the next six months. But the University of Maryland's Ron Walters, who was Jesse Jackson's deputy campaign manager in 1984, points to another problem. "Bradley doesn't seem to have much of a southern organization, which is odd for someone who's making race a centerpiece of his campaign."

That Cornel West is the only person the Bradley campaign could name as advising the candidate on racial issues speaks volumes.

Given all the attention Bradley is devoting to racial issues, I thought I ought to find out who his advisers on race are, so I called his campaign headquarters in New Jersey. "You might try Cornel West," deputy press secretary Tony Wyche told me. "Anyone else?" I asked. "No, I think he would be best," replied Wyche.

That Cornel West, a black professor at Harvard University, is the only person the Bradley campaign could name as consulting with Bradley on racial issues speaks volumes about Bradley's racial crusade. West's years of intellectual posing have earned him fame and fortune in the academy (his previous teaching job was at Princeton);

Matthew Rees is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

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his prodigious writings are, in the words of Leon Wieseltier of the *New Republic*, "monuments to the devastation of a mind by the squalls of theory." Fiery black House member Maxine Waters affirms, "I love Cornel West."

Indeed, West's fingerprints were all over Bradley's ill-advised decision to visit Harlem on the evening of August 23 and spend two hours at the headquarters of the National Action Network, by the Reverend Al Sharpton (West endorsed Sharpton's 1992 Senate candidacy and has been supportive of his activities). That Bradley would appear alongside Sharpton undermines his earnest pleas for racial healing, as Sharpton has made a comfortable living in New York as a race hustler, turning every perceived slight into grounds for a racial jihad. His demagoguery in the case of Tawana Brawley, a teenager who pretended to have been raped and abandoned in a trash bag by white policemen, earned him the moniker "Al Charlatan."

Bradley might have used his visit to Harlem as an opportunity to challenge Sharpton for his divisiveness, as Bill Clinton challenged the rap singer Sister Souljah in 1992. Instead, he advocated such a left-wing agenda that when he finished, the Sharpton-friendly crowd gave him a standing ovation. Sharpton, who says he's leaning toward an endorsement of Bradley, later told me he's had 20 candidates appear before his group over the past two years, and Bradley received the warmest reception. Bradley has even hired Sharpton's campaign manager from the 1997 mayoral race, Jacques DeGraff.

Al Sharpton says that 20 candidates have appeared before his group in the past two years, and Bradley received the warmest welcome.

That Bradley would turn to figures like Sharpton and West is the logical culmination of his racial journey. He's talked about race regularly since he was a pro basketball player in the 1960s and '70s, but over the past ten years he's become almost obsessed with it. During this period he's pushed a conventional liberal line, cloaked in the fuzzy, high-minded rhetoric for which he became known as a senator. What's changed in the presidential campaign is that while in the past he occasionally acknowledged that blacks were responsible for some of their misfortunes, these days one is more likely to conclude, as Jay Nordlinger put it in *National Review*, that "drinking fountains are still separate, little girls in pretty dresses are being blown up in churches, and Bull Connor's dogs continue to bark."

Bradley's outreach to blacks, in the South and elsewhere, has mostly consisted of speaking to old-line civil rights groups like the NAACP. Last month he addressed Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH annual convention and trotted out all the usual tropes. He told the audience Jackson's life reminded him of the saying "One person with courage makes a majority." Then, addressing Jackson personally, he said, "Your idealism and your commitment make this country a better place."

The rest of the speech was a lot like all the others Bradley delivers about race. He mentioned how moved he had been as a Senate intern back in 1964, watching the Civil Rights Act being passed. Later, he touted his 1992 Senate speech condemning the treatment of Rodney King and mentioned that he had hit the podium 56 times, symbolizing the number of police baton blows that struck King. He closed with a racial unity pledge, saying, "If I'm president and you want to please the boss, you're going to have to show how in your life, in your company, in your department, you promoted racial unity and racial understanding in this country."

This earnestness frequently shades off into sheer silliness. The lengthy bio on Bradley's Web site specifies that when the senator delivered his Rodney King speech, "he spoke from the heart." And during a speech at Cooper Union in New York in April, he recounted the contact he had had with different minority groups and then observed, "When I experience all these things I'm reminded by how much I care."

As a former professional basketball player, Bradley has been tapping the well-heeled fraternity of black athletes. Michael Jordan and his wife have each contributed $1,000 to Bradley's campaign, though it's considered unlikely Jordan will campaign for Bradley (he famously refused to back a black candidate running against Jesse Helms in 1990, saying "Republicans buy sneakers, too"). Even if Jordan did work for Bradley, it's doubtful how much value his effort would hold. "I don't think most people know what Michael Jordan stands for," says Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. Bradley will have the enthusiastic backing of former hoop stars like Wes Unseld, Dave Bing, and Oscar Robertson, though they too are likely to be of limited value. All have been out of the spotlight for years, and none has any real experience in politics.

The more fundamental problem for Bradley, as he seeks black votes, is his opponent. Gore is much better known than Bradley, particularly in the South, where 55 percent of all black voters live. Gore is also tied to Clinton, a big plus with blacks. And throughout his career in politics, Gore has devoted considerable time and energy to winning black support. The final obstacle is that on policy matters, Bradley and Gore have few real differences, the 1996 welfare bill being a notable exception. All

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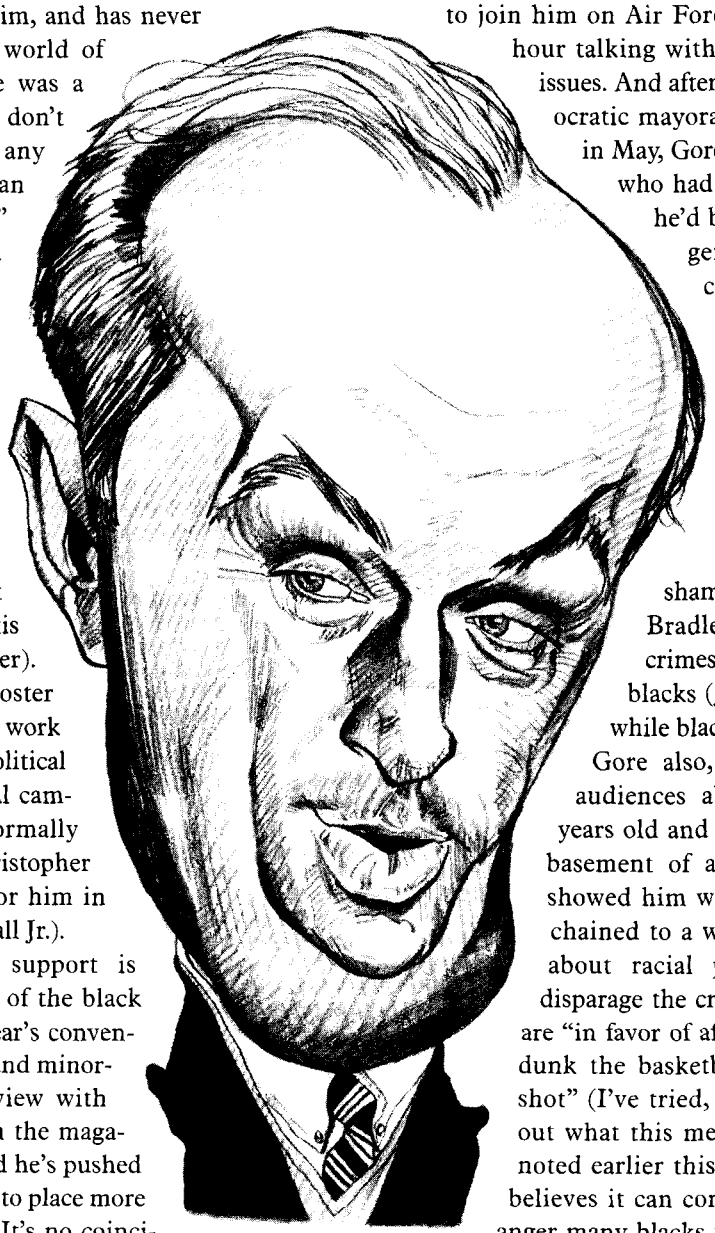
of these factors prompt David Bositis, senior political analyst at the Joint Center, to conclude that "Gore pretty much has the black vote."

Consider black elected officials, whose endorsements carry considerable weight with black voters. Bradley has none of note supporting him, and has never spent much time in the world of black politics. "When he was a senator," says Conyers, "I don't remember him having any relations with the African American community." Gore, by contrast, has a star-studded list that includes House members like Charlie Rangel, John Lewis, and Eleanor Holmes Norton and mayors like Marc Morial of New Orleans, Wellington Webb of Denver, and Michael White of Cleveland (he's also got cabinet members like Alexis Herman and Rodney Slater). Gore can also point to a roster of high-profile blacks who work for him (Donna Brazile, political director of the presidential campaign), advise him informally (John Hope Franklin, Christopher Edley), or have worked for him in the past (Thurgood Marshall Jr.).

Complementing this support is Gore's assiduous stroking of the black media. He spoke at this year's conventions of black newspapers and minority journalists; his interview with *Black Enterprise* appears in the magazine's September issue; and he's pushed for the federal government to place more ads in black publications. It's no coincidence Gore's picture has appeared in *Jet*, a black weekly magazine, 26 times in the past two years, while Bradley's has appeared just 5 times.



Bill Bradley

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

Gore, unlike Bradley, is also good at schmoozing blacks. Speaking at a Detroit NAACP meeting in April, Gore compared Conyers, who loyally defended the White House during the impeachment debate, to Thurgood Marshall. Last year, he reached out to Jesse Jackson Jr., whose wife gave birth prematurely, resulting in the death of their child (Jackson appreciated the gesture, but hasn't endorsed either Gore or Bradley and has been flirting with Warren Beatty). More recently, when Gore flew to Houston last month for the National Urban League convention, he invited black House members like James Clyburn, Donald Payne, Earl Hilliard, and Albert Wynn to join him on Air Force Two and then spent an hour talking with them on a wide range of issues. And after John Street won the Democratic mayoral primary in Philadelphia in May, Gore called Rep. Chaka Fattah, who had supported Street, and said he'd be happy to help out in the general election. Fattah, by contrast, hasn't spoken with Bradley since he started running for president.

Because he's already popular with blacks, Gore hasn't had to place race at the center of his campaign. His pandering, though, has been just as shameless as Bradley's. He, like Bradley, regularly invokes hate crimes and other mistreatment of blacks (Jasper, Texas, and "driving while black" are two of his favorites). Gore also, on occasion, tells black audiences about when he was eight years old and his father took him to the basement of a Tennessee mansion and showed him where slaves had been kept chained to a wall. And when Gore talks about racial preferences, it's only to disparage the critics, claiming such people are "in favor of affirmative action if you can dunk the basketball or sink a three-point shot" (I've tried, without success, to figure out what this means). The *Washington Post* noted earlier this year that "the Gore team believes it can continue to capitalize on the anger many blacks feel toward Republicans in the wake of the presidential impeachment proceedings."

Indeed, Gore isn't leaving anything to chance. On September 9, he traveled to the Capitol and joined the Congressional Black Caucus for lunch. Rather than bore his hosts with a stump speech, he took their questions on subjects like education, environmental racism, and access to capital. I spoke to five members of the caucus afterwards, and all were beaming over his performance. And Bradley? He hadn't been invited. ♦

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Reno Evil, Freeh No Evil?

The Clinton administration has appointed John Danforth to investigate Waco. Isn't that Congress's responsibility?

By David Frum

Suddenly, unaccountable one-man investigations are back in fashion in Washington. After months of decrying Ken Starr, Donald Smaltz, and other inconvenient busybodies, the Clinton administration has executed a stunning triple-lutz on its latest scandal and appointed former senator John Danforth as an independent investigator of possible FBI deception and coverup during and after the siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, in April 1993.

These acrobatics are all the more impressive because the Clinton administration has until now bitterly resisted any inquiry into the events at Waco beyond that conducted by its own officials. When congressman William Clinger of Pennsylvania convened hearings into Waco in 1995, President Clinton blasted his actions as an attack on federal law-enforcement. That, however, was back in the days before Clinton found himself on the receiving end of federal law enforcement. Since 1998, Clinton has been more than eager to join in such attacks.

Janet Reno

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

Carefully calibrated attacks, that is. What the Clinton administration is now ready to entertain are questions about the conduct of the FBI. What it is eager to shut off are questions about the conduct of the Department of Justice.

David Frum is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard *and the author of a forthcoming history of life in the 1970s,* How We Got Here *(Basic).*

When Congress last looked at Waco, it concluded that the Branch Davidians did indeed gun down at least 19 of their own members and then set fire to their compound. But it also found that, in the words of the Clinger report, the "decision by Attorney General Janet Reno to approve the FBI's plan to end the standoff on April 19 was premature, wrong, and highly irresponsible. In authorizing the assault to proceed, Attorney General Reno was seriously negligent. She knew or should have known that the plan to end the standoff would endanger the lives of the Davidians inside the residence, including the children. The Attorney General knew or should have known that there was little risk to the FBI agents, society as a whole, or to the Davidians from continuing this standoff and that the possibility of a peaceful resolution continued to exist. . . . Following the FBI's April 19 assault on the Branch Davidian compound, Attorney General Reno offered her resignation. In light of her ultimate responsibility for the disastrous assault and its resulting deaths the President should have accepted it."

God only knows what Congress might conclude if it had another look at the record of the attorney general whom senator Phil Gramm accurately calls "always the last person to know."

Mysteriously, however, Congress seems to be falling in with the Clinton administration's views. While Sen. Gramm has endorsed new hearings, majority leader Trent Lott has opposed them, and the House leadership has not been heard from at all. Bruised and battered by the failure of the hearings chaired by senators D'Amato and Thompson to uncover the truth, and by the embarrassing fiasco

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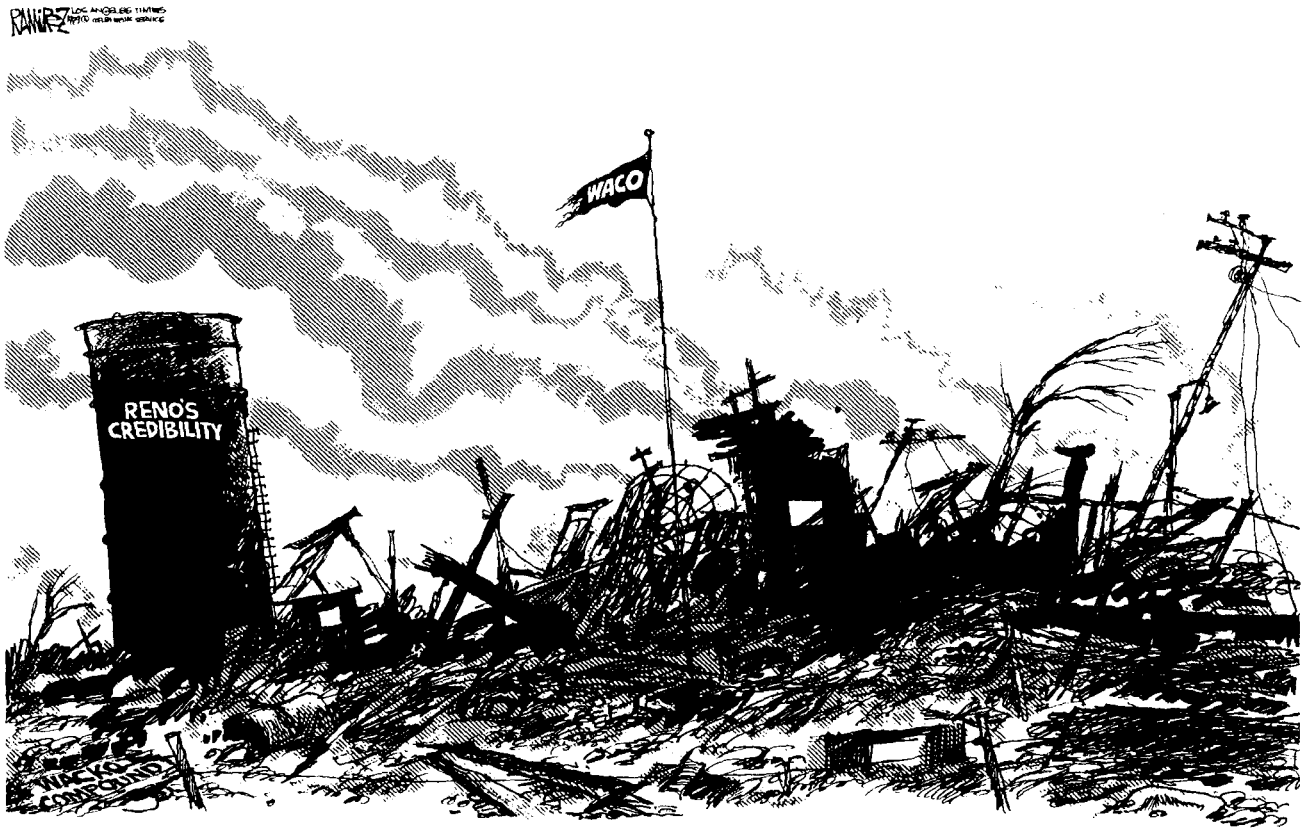

Michael Ramirez

of representative Dan Burton's work, congressional Republicans seem to have decided to quit the investigation business altogether. This is shirking, and it's dangerous. One of the ugly features of life in the Clinton years has been the spread of dark, mad suspicions and rumors across the American landscape: Vince Foster, TWA 800, Ron Brown, and so on. Conspiracy theories have always been with us, but in the shadows cast by the organized lying of the Clinton years, they have sprouted and grown. Nothing can dispel the shadows except truth told in public.

The appeal of the independent investigator is the hope that the task of uncovering the truth can be separated from the grubbiness of politics. But that hope is an illusory one, and it's especially illusory with Waco. The truth that America needs now is not so much what happened during the siege—the discovery that the FBI may have fired incendiary gas at the Branch Davidian compound six hours before the fire burst out does not alter the facts of suicide established by the Clinger subcommittee—but what happened in Washington before and after. The truth that's needed has to do with Janet Reno's Department of Justice (if it is Janet Reno's) and the senior leadership of the FBI. It's a truth that needs not just to be told, but to be aired. And (for better or worse) Congress is the nation's preeminent platform for airing.

A decade ago, somebody published a book about the Constitution under the clever title *A Machine That Would Go of Itself*. Americans yearn for a mechanism of government that can chug effectively along without regard to the character of its drivers. Back in the 1950s, political scientists like David Truman taught that this was just what men like James Madison were trying to establish: a system so exquisitely balanced that it could not be much harmed by the inadequacies and weaknesses of the men seemingly in charge of it.

But governments do not go of themselves, and Madison knew it. "The aim of every political constitution," he wrote in Federalist 57, "is or ought to be first to obtain for rulers, men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue the common good of society; and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous, whilst they continue to hold their public trust."

The harm done to American society by the Clinton administration's bad character was a political wrong. It can only be fixed politically, with the tools of politics. If a space shuttle crashes or a water purification plant backs up, those are technical problems that require the sort of expert evaluation that somebody from outside the political system can provide. But when 80 people die because a gullible attorney general is manipulated by her subordinates, and when evidence appears that this same gullible attorney general has continued to be deceived for years, that is a problem that no expert can fix. At least one of the people entrusted with America's police forces has proved unworthy of that trust, and ultimately the job of figuring out who that person is belongs not to an outside commissioner, no matter how distinguished, but to the electors, and thus the representatives who speak for them. ♦

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A Real Education President

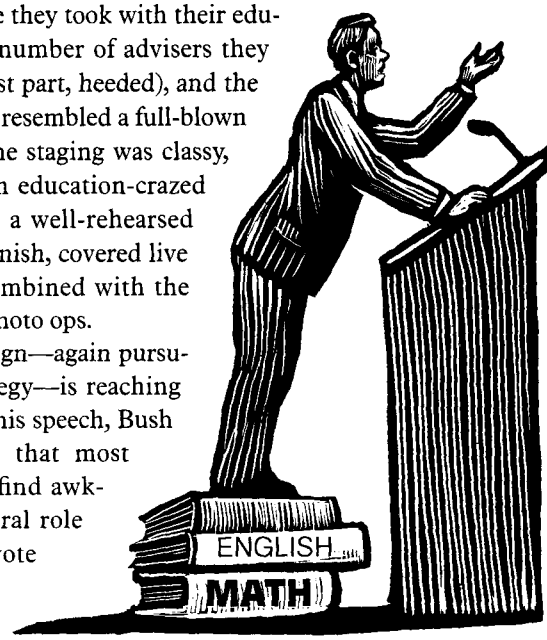
With his school-reform plan, George W. Bush embraces a federal role and looks ahead to the general election.

By Chester E. Finn Jr.

Before George W. Bush delivered his first big education address, his team briefed conservative education policy experts on what the speech would contain. At these briefings and throughout the following couple of weeks, three things have stood out about Bush's strategy.

First, the Bush campaign is already shifting into general-election mode. The care they took with their education policy package, the number of advisers they drew upon (and, for the most part, heeded), and the sophistication of the rollout resembled a full-blown White House unveiling. The staging was classy, too: a Hispanic audience in education-crazed (and vote-rich) California; a well-rehearsed talk, delivered partly in Spanish, covered live on national TV; all this combined with the requisite school visits and photo ops.

Second, the Bush campaign—again pursuing a general-election strategy—is reaching for the political middle. In his speech, Bush went straight for a topic that most Republican office-seekers find awkward: the appropriate federal role in education. Many who vote in GOP primaries, of course, don't think Washington should play any role in education, while the general electorate rewards candidates who assign a powerful role to Washington. Bush has now embraced an education policy that, indeed, gives Washington a powerful role to play. Which is surely why his campaign staff took such pains to brief potential critics on the right—a tactic that worked. But for some carping about Bush sounding "Clintonesque," most complaints have come from the left.



Third, Bush's overall education reform plan is impressive. The extensive fact sheet that accompanied the speech ("Education Policy of George W. Bush, Part I") contains a five-point "philosophy of reform" that sets forth the essential elements of school reform as well as I've ever seen. The first three of these create a structure of standards, tests, and accountability; the fourth offers freedom to individual schools; and the fifth insists on "competition" and the "power of parental choice" as "essential" to "raising standards and creating accountability."

Those five bullets also embody what Bush has been doing in Texas with fair success. He's not just giving voice to think-tank nostrums and focus-group pleasers never before tried in the real world. His track record in the Lone Star state includes a solid performance in turning around K-12 education. (None of the other remaining GOP candidates can make such a claim. Neither can Al Gore or Bill Bradley.) Education is meant to be one of Bush's singular assets, and he and his troops are treating it that way.

It's a solid record, but not perfect. Texas has lots of charter schools but no publicly funded vouchers. Governor-watchers say Bush hasn't pushed the Texas legislature very hard, unlike his brother who successfully fought the Florida legislature to pass a statewide voucher program for children otherwise stuck in awful schools. Texas has good academic standards and a formidable testing program, but critics say the tests aren't hard enough and that too many handicapped and limited-English youngsters don't take them. The state has a worthy,

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Illustrations by Kevin Chadwick

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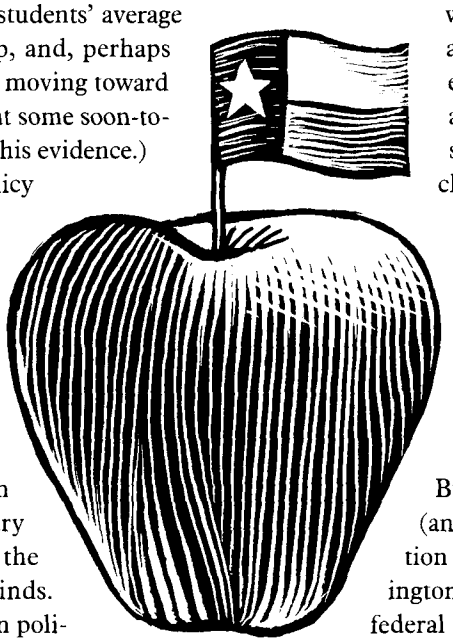
phonics-based, early-reading program, but is squishy on bilingual education. And so forth. It's also worth bearing in mind that Texas is one of the few places where teachers' unions don't dictate education policy. The unions don't amount to much politically. Which makes it easier for a governor to build a record of education reform.

Still, our best objective gauge of student achievement shows real progress in Texas. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, students' average scores in core subjects have gone up, and, perhaps most notably, minority youngsters are moving toward the front of the line. (Rumor has it that some soon-to-be-released NAEP results will add to this evidence.)



Disadvantaged kids and federal policy were the main thrust of Bush's recent speech, the first of three on education. The second is said to deal with school safety and discipline, the third more explicitly with choice and competition. Bush's timing is shrewd. Right now, Congress is returning from recess to see whether it can make any progress in reforming the moribund Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the topic is also on many governors' minds. But, most important, federal education policy is one spot where Gore is making headway with voters.

In his first speech, Bush offered three proposals. The one that got attention—because it smells like vouchers and thus is inherently newsworthy—would overhaul the big Title I program, which is meant to close the learning gap between poor and middle class kids. Never has a federal program more urgently needed an overhaul, and nowhere in education is it easier for Republicans to contrast themselves with the Clinton-Gore administration, whose Title I mantra is "stay the course." Bush focused, in particular, on the scandal of schools that run lousy Title I programs yet continue to get federal dollars. He would give states three years to turn such schools around or—echoes of brother Jeb's work in Florida—hand the money to the kids' parents to spend on schools of their choosing.

The second proposal would move Head Start from Health and Human Services to the Education Department and transform it from a child-development program to a reading-and-math readiness program. This, too, is a worthy and overdue change, and Bush seems not to mind being the first Republican in memory to seek to expand the unloved Department of Education. Third and most nebulous among his proposals is an unimpeachable precept—only effective federal programs should continue—combined with a redirection of the Education Department's research wing.

The details are worth chewing over, which the education policy hive will inevitably do. Some bits seem to me a little too intricate, others not quite fully developed. The larger point, though, is what these proposals indicate about the kind of "education president" George W. Bush would be: unafraid to make bold changes, even when this means riling vested interests and lassoing sacred cows; willing, even eager, to use federal power and programs as instruments of change, never mind some friction with states and localities; clearly focused on needy kids; single-minded about results rather than inputs or processes; and astute about the dynamics of reform, in particular about the political imperative of siding (compassionately!) with kids and parents rather than institutions and bureaucracies.

That last characteristic is what saves Bush from Clintonism. The White House (and vice president) have a theory of education change that relies, at day's end, on Washington regulators. All their proposals hinge on federal action and enforcement. Bush isn't shy about using federal clout, but not to micromanage class size, pupil promotion policies, and school discipline. He would use it to leverage change via parental choice, school competition, and empowered (and accountable) states, while relying on plentiful data about what does and doesn't work. That may be just the jujitsu needed to turn around our muscle-bound education system. ♦

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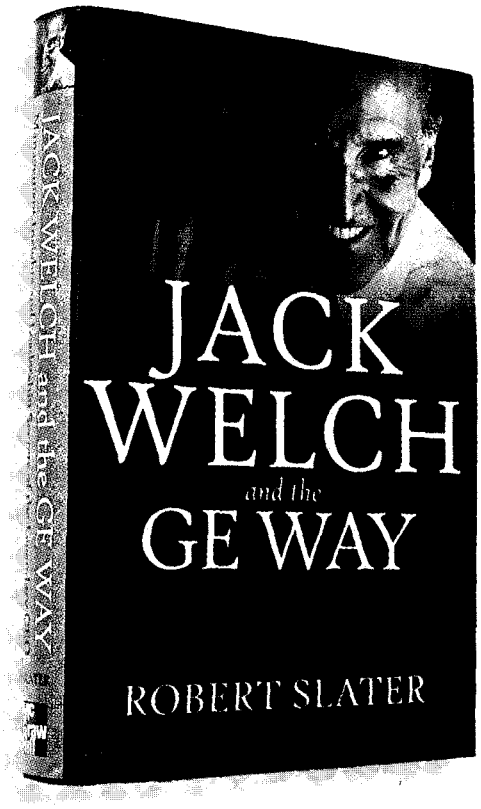

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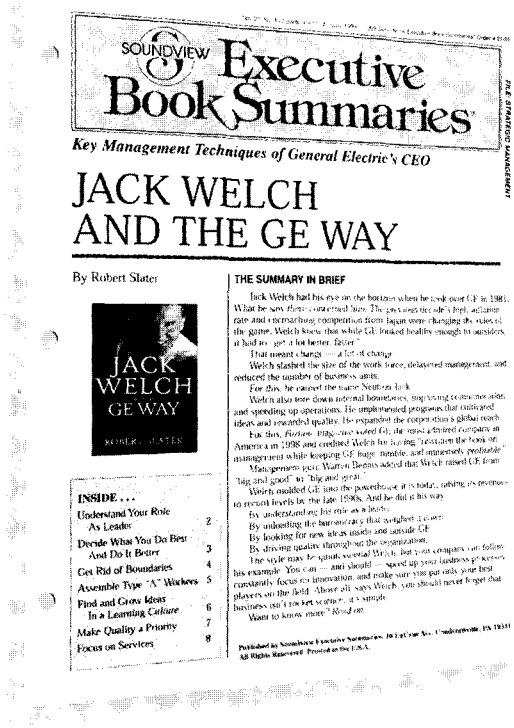
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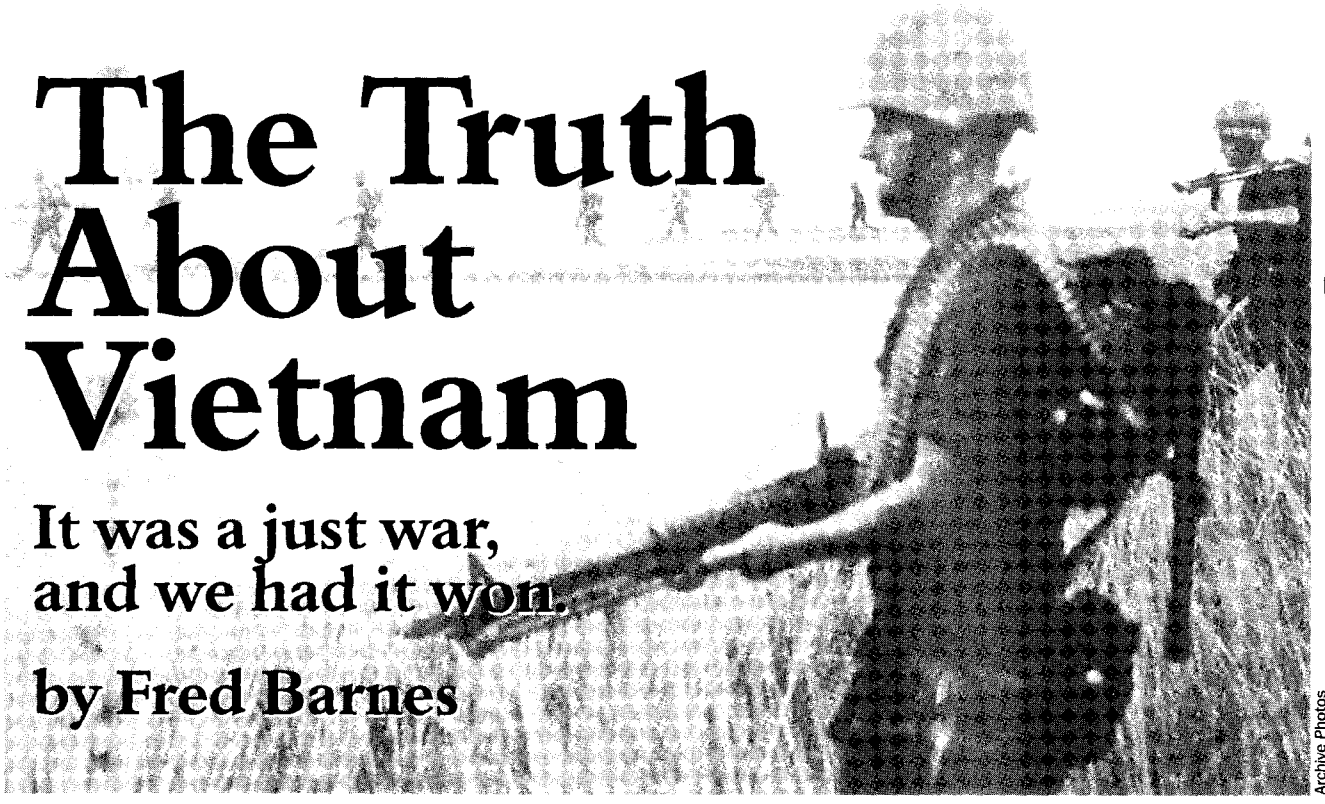
The Truth About Vietnam

It was a just war, and we had it won.

by Fred Barnes



Archive Photos

Listen to Frances FitzGerald and you'll begin to understand why journalists and historians are so infuriating on the subject of the Vietnam war. They've written and uttered so much in the past thirty-plus years, but they've learned nothing. *Fire in the Lake*, FitzGerald's Pulitzer Prize-winning attack on America's role in Vietnam, was published in 1972. Since then, she appears not to have had a contrary thought, a qualm, a regret, or even a mild pang about what she wrote. Interviewed by Brian Lamb on C-SPAN earlier this year, she insisted the war was unwinnable by the United States and its South Vietnamese allies, partly because U.S. policymakers didn't understand the North Vietnamese (whom she did not criticize). "We never even considered the possibility of a neutral Vietnam," FitzGerald said. "It seems to me we were destroying ourselves and destroying the Vietnamese."

A flood of new facts has not shaken her. The disappearance of the supposedly independent and indigenous Viet Cong once the North Vietnamese Communists seized South Vietnam, the repression and economic hardship imposed by the new regime, the executions (more than sixty thousand), the new gulag of "re-education" camps, the deaths in the camps (maybe two hundred and fifty thousand), the boat people (roughly one million), the emergence of a Vietnamese diaspora (two million), the revelation that 327,000 Chinese troops and as many as three thousand Soviets were deployed in North Vietnam to aid Hanoi during the war, the admission in North Vietnamese accounts that they would have quickly sought to topple a neutral coalition government in Saigon, the aggressive wars waged by North Vietnam, after South Vietnam's fall in 1975, against Cambodia and China—none of this has fazed FitzGerald, caused her to revise her thinking, or prompted an apology. She is frozen in time.

And she is not alone. Sad to say, FitzGerald's view of Vietnam is the conventional wisdom today, shared by academics and the media and popularized in such movies as *Apocalypse Now*. It's a view that asserts America succumbed to mindless anti-communism and intervened in a war—a civil war, really—that it couldn't win, even while using excessive force, and wound up humiliating itself and killing fifty-eight thousand GIs and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese in vain. Notice how closely this matches the leftist critique of the late 1960s. That's what I mean by frozen in time.

Likewise, the dissenting conservative view of Vietnam. It, too, is a relic of the war years, blaming President Johnson and his aides in Washington, and the later secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, for micromanaging the war and limiting the military's ability to pursue a winning strategy. For a quarter century now, conservative politicians have feasted on this theme. President Reagan, for one, declared in 1981 that soldiers in Vietnam "who obeyed their country's call and fought as bravely and well as any Americans in our history [were] denied permission to win." And President Bush vowed pointedly in 1990 to let his military commanders, not the White House, decide tactics in the Gulf war.

Two schools of thought: both dinosaurs, both wrong. And what's amazing is that no revisionist school has come forth—until 1999. Now, Michael Lind's *Vietnam: The Necessary War* and Lewis Sorley's *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* make a persuasive case for a fresh and different view of Vietnam.

Each does so by looking at the war through a new prism. Lind, who made his name as a journalist by ostentatiously abandoning conservatism, says: "I examine the Vietnam War in light of the

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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end of the Cold War, from a centrist perspective more sympathetic to American Cold War policymakers than that of their critics on the left and the right." He also leans heavily on writings and newly disclosed documents from North Vietnam. Sorley, an ex-Army officer and CIA official, views the war from the perspective of American military officers. He spent more than a year listening to 455 tapes of meetings and conversations at U.S. military headquarters in Saigon during General Creighton Abrams's tenure as commander from mid-1968 to 1972.

Lind and Sorley don't see eye to eye on everything. But they mostly agree, and if we put their books together to synthesize the complete revisionist view, we discover four underappreciated truths about the Vietnam war:

- America was right to intervene militarily, for the worldwide consequences would have been far worse for the non-Communist world if it hadn't.
- General William Westmoreland's strategy of using massive force to "search and destroy" and maximize the enemy's death toll was bound to fail, and did.
- Not only was the war winnable, but it had actually been won by sometime in 1970, as the strategy of Westmoreland's successor, General Abrams—emphasizing control of territory, not enemy dead—all but snuffed out the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese as major threats in South Vietnam.
- The war was ultimately lost not because of limits on the American military but because American support for South Vietnam was removed.

Before Lind and Sorley, there were hints of revisionism, but not many. The late Peter Braestrup, who covered Vietnam for the *Washington Post*, deconstructed the media's claim that the Tet Offensive in January 1968 was a victory for the Communists. Quite the contrary, Braestrup asserted in his two-volume study, *Big Story*, in 1977. And he showed in detail how the American press, Walter Cronkite included, got the story wrong.

But rather than initiating a wave of revisionism, Braestrup touched off a squall of complaints and alibis by wounded reporters. So far as I know, only two reporters, neither an American, have lamented whatever aid and comfort their writings gave to Hanoi. William Shawcross, a British journalist, wrote in 1993: "Those of us who were opposed to the American effort in Indochina should be humbled by the scale of suffering by the Communist victors." And in the late 1970s, Frenchman Jean Lacouture, a biographer of Ho Chi-Minh, admitted "his shame for having contributed to the installation of one of the most oppressive regimes history has ever known."

A Better War
The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam
by Lewis Sorley
Harcourt Brace, 507 pp., $28

Vietnam
The Necessary War
by Michael Lind
Free Press, 336 pp., $25

Reporting Vietnam
American Journalism
Part 1: 1959-1969
Part 2: 1969-1975
Library of America, 1715 pp., $70

In his aptly titled 1989 book *Lost Victory*, ex-CIA director William Colby offered a close approximation of the revisionist view. He argued that "on the ground in South Vietnam, the war had been won" after the Viet Cong were scattered and a massive North Vietnamese assault was repulsed in 1972. But Colby, having run the "pacification" program in South Vietnam and worked closely with General Abrams and U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, was seen as a special pleader.

He did, however, make a telling point about writers on Vietnam. "Most of the literature on the war essentially stops at 1968, a full seven years before the end," he wrote. By doing so, Colby commented later, chroniclers of the war present a story "similar to what we would know if histories of World War II stopped before Stalingrad, Operation Torch in North Africa and Guadalcanal in the Pacific." He faulted Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*, a riveting biography of American official John Paul Vann, for devoting only seventy of its eight hundred pages to the period after mid-1968. Vann himself thought the war had been turned around during those years, a contention Sheehan dismissed.

In this new revisionism of 1999, however, Sorley handles the practical, and Lind the geopolitical. Under Westmoreland from 1964 to 1968, Sorley writes, the war went disastrously. Not only was his strategy of luring the enemy into large battles and stressing body counts a failure, but Westmoreland also got little out of the South Vietnamese military. He elbowed them out of the way, thus "abdicating his assigned role as the senior adviser to those forces and essentially stunting their development for a crucial four years." Westmoreland returned to the Pentagon shortly after the Tet Offensive, and his strategy of attrition warfare was wisely abandoned.

Under Abrams, search-and-destroy was replaced by clear-and-hold. "The object was not destruction but control, and in this case particularly control of the population," Sorley says. In other words, take back the areas seized by the Communists and secure others, like Saigon, threatened by their rockets and sappers. A stepped-up pacification program helped, "establishing a continuous government presence in rural villages and hamlets so as to bring security and economic and social benefits to the people." So did the Phoenix program of eradicating the local Viet Cong "infrastructure," meaning the part-time cadres. So did efforts to stem the flow of supplies from North Vietnam down the Ho Chi-Minh trail.

But what really worked was Vietnamization, the reliance on Saigon's forces as American troops were gradually brought home. The "draw-down," Sorley notes, "was, contrary to many later assertions, wholly acceptable to the U.S. command." Abrams "always main-

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Harcourt Brace

William Colby, Creighton Abrams, and Ellsworth Bunker, architects of the new Vietnam strategy.

tained that the problem was not lack of manpower, but how the existing manpower was used." He never requested more troops or protested scheduled withdrawals. In fact, Abrams felt American troops had "helped too much," retarding the Vietnamese. Anyway, "by late 1969 almost the entire population [of South Vietnam] was thought to be living under substantially secure conditions," according to Sorley, and by early 1970 the "crossover point" had been reached. The enemy was losing more soldiers than it could replace, and the South Vietnamese army was able to turn back their advances.

"There came a time when the war was won," says Sorley. "The fighting wasn't over, but the war was won. This achievement can probably best be dated in late 1970, after the Cambodian incursion." In those days, Colby found he could travel around the Mekong Delta at night. He took the British ambassador on a tour outside Hue in an unarmed jeep. Sir Robert Thompson, the British anti-terrorism expert, declared Saigon safer than most American cities. And Abrams quipped: "I think President Thieu is freer to move around in *his* country than President Nixon is in *his*."

The press missed most of this, Sorley writes, preferring to cover battles:

> Maybe it wasn't exciting enough, maybe it wasn't graphic enough for television, maybe it was too difficult to comprehend or to explain, maybe it ran counter to preconceived expectations or even wishes.... Hamlets in which the population remained secure, refugees who were able to return to their villages, distribution of land to the peasantry, miracle rice harvests, roads kept open for farm-to-market traffic, and the election and training of village governments were less dramatic than whatever fighting still went on, but they were also infinitely more important in terms of how the war was going.

Soon enough, the victory was thrown away, first by the 1972 peace settlement that allowed North Vietnam to leave 160,000 troops in South Vietnam, then by the refusal of Washington to retaliate against Hanoi's continued infiltration in violation of the agreement, finally by Congress's decision to cut off all aid to South Vietnam. The Soviet Union and China proved more faithful allies to North Vietnam than the United States was to South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese had demonstrated they could meet the military challenge, notably in repulsing Hanoi's sweeping 1972 offensive, but only if America "provided the continuing airpower, naval forces, logistics, and financial support." With that taken away, the South Vietnamese army collapsed.

Abrams and his aides often talked about South Korea as the model for South Vietnam. There, two American divisions stayed behind after the North Koreans were driven out, enough to deter another attack and allow South Korea to flourish. Lind, too, is attracted to the Korea analogy. The Korean and South Vietnamese wars were similar, he says, "but the United States had left tens of thousands of troops to guard South Korea from the Communist North. In contrast, the United States abandoned its weak South Vietnamese ally to defend itself." If it was rational to leave troops in Korea, where they remain today, then it was to leave a contingent in South Vietnam as well, Lind says. Hard to argue with that.

Lind makes a larger point: In the context of the Cold War, the United States had no choice but to intervene in Vietnam. Otherwise, it would sacrifice its "credibility as a military power and reliable ally" to both enemies and allies. "The danger," Lind writes, "was that if the United States were perceived as lacking in military capacity, political resolve, or both, the Soviet Union and/or China and their proxies would act more aggressively, while U.S. allies, including important industrial democracies such as West Germany and Japan, would be inclined to appease the Communist great powers."

The proof of Lind's point came after South Vietnam fell in 1975. The Soviet Union and its friends *were* emboldened "to engage in more assertive and reckless imperialism throughout the world." The Soviets transported Cuban troops to fight in Angola and Ethiopia, and they invaded Afghanistan themselves. Nicaragua fell to the Communist Sandinistas. And the West German tendency to appease the Soviets grew. In short, there was a pro-Soviet realignment globally, short-lived but real. "The victory of Moscow's Vietnamese clients gave the declining Soviet regime a boost in prestige and morale for much of a decade," Lind insists.

Vietnam: The Necessary War is marred by several strange theories. Lind says, for instance, we needed an American Charles de Gaulle to pull U.S. troops out of Vietnam in the late 1960s before the level of casualties

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eroded domestic support for waging the Cold War in other regions. He absurdly reduces America's political struggle over Vietnam to a dispute between "the Greater New England anti-interventionist bloc" and the pro-military South.

But Lind cleverly takes apart a series of leftist myths about the Vietnam war. Was Ho Chi-Minh a patriot who just happened to be a Marxist? Lind recounts his record as a doctrinaire Stalinist who murdered non-Communist leaders and dissidents. And Ho was no Tito either with whom American leaders "missed opportunities" to forge an early alliance. This is a favorite notion of former defense secretary Robert McNamara, who met with Hanoi officials in 1997. Despite McNamara's claims, there's no evidence North Vietnam would ever have permitted a coalition government to last indefinitely in Saigon.

My fear is that the revisionist school of Sorley and Lind, as powerful as their case is, will be obscured by the spate of books on Vietnam that continue to be published and reliably take the conventional view. The worst of the lot is *Reporting Vietnam*, the Library of America's lavishly praised two volumes of writings by correspondents who covered the war. *Reporting Vietnam* contains, in all, 113 mostly negative pieces by more than eighty writers, including Frances FitzGerald. In the second volume, covering 1969 to 1975, only a piece by Peter Kann of the *Wall Street Journal* suggests South Vietnam might be making progress in the war. Kann, now the *Wall Street Journal*'s publisher, is more famous for a piece in 1992 chastising Bill Clinton for reiterating his college-age view that American intervention was wrong. Hindsight, Kann noted, should have taught Clinton "who were the good guys and who were the bad guys" and that America's "painful Vietnam experience bought the time" for the foundation of the free markets and political freedoms that have since appeared across most of Asia.

But Clinton, like FitzGerald and so many others, hasn't learned a thing. ♦

Judging Clinton

Richard Posner finds the president guilty—and wonders why we should care. **BY DAVID TELL**

Richard A. Posner, chief judge of the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, is that rarest thing in government employ, as in life generally. He is a real writer: vivid, witty, conscious of language's weave and rhythm. He also knows quite a lot. Both his official opinions and his voluminous extracurricular productions are shot through with uncommon erudition. You get your law from Posner. And you get your cognitive psychology and classical sociology and history of ethics in the bargain. It is a heady mix, so much obvious talent and learning, and for casual readers of his latest book it may prove impossible to resist. Which would be a pity. Resistance is warranted. The book is appalling.

An Affair of State
The Investigation, Impeachment, and Trial of President Clinton
by Richard Posner
Harvard Univ. Press, 276 pp., $25

An Affair of State is Posner's analytical excursion through the Lewinsky scandal and the political, cultural, and legal responses that scandal inspired. There is plenty of fluid prose, along with a good deal of allusive renaissancery about "the availability heuristic" and Immanuel Kant and "signaling and social-norm theory." To which typically Posnerian charms the judge here adds an even more enticing lure: his deceptively friendly bottom line.

It is Posner's view, advanced with an air of detached bemusement, that nearly all the principals in last year's uproar—pro- and contra-Clinton—were "fools, knaves, cowards, and blunderers." That the commentary provided us along the way by pundits, lawyers, and intellectuals, in particular, was "frenzied and irrational," ignorant or dishonest. That the president should never have been subjected to a sex harassment lawsuit while in office. That such crimes as the president committed in the course and aftermath of that lawsuit, while "reprehensible," should never have been investigated under the ill-conceived independent counsel statute. That in Clinton's subsequent House and Senate ordeal, "the pragmatist would lean against impeachment." And that the entire episode, which so recently appeared "a political crisis of the first magnitude," now, in retrospect, seems just a measly passing "drama." Or a "comedy."

As it happens, of course, this much is not a novel judgment. In fact, it very closely resembles the safe, dead center of respectable American opinion at the moment: Clinton is badly flawed, but the effort to remove him from office was ludicrous hysteria—pretty much what any self-respecting, vaguely *au courant* but politically inert *New York Times* subscriber already believes. Or, more precisely, what he thinks he *should* believe. And imagines he *would* believe had he paid genuine attention during the Lewinsky imbroglio and bothered to sort out the issues for himself. Flipping through *An Affair of State*, such a fellow will no doubt be immensely flattered to find his guesswork assumptions about the scandal endorsed—and accorded the status of high philosophical "pragmatism"—by a whip-smart federal judge who has freshly reviewed the evidence, apportions blame across the board, and claims only to be attempting a work of "distinguished contemporaneous history" without "any hint of partisanship."

Except that Posner has in mind something vastly bolder than ratification of the existing consensus. Unsuspecting readers beware.

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A prudent judge descends from the "rigid formalism" of principle, precedent, and other "abstract rules," Posner advises, to make "closer engagement with the particulars" of a given case. Connoisseurs of Lewinskyiana will thus be surprised by the extent to which, in this given case, Posner feels free to offer conclusions of fact that the public record either cannot sustain or actually refutes. He reports without qualification, for example, that in January 1998, when Kenneth Starr's agents first confronted Monica Lewinsky, they offered her immunity from prosecution if she would "agree to record conversations with Clinton and [Vernon] Jordan." But this allegation has been hotly disputed by the independent counsel's office, and its truth has yet to be established. Posner says Clinton "testified falsely" when he "denied discussing with [Betty] Currie the recovery of gifts" from Lewinsky, and that he "clearly and materially lied when he said that he had never had an erotic encounter with Kathleen Willey." One wonders how the judge can know such things for sure.

And one wonders why he seems *not* to know certain other things. Posner calls it "plausible, though not proven" that Sidney Blumenthal was the source of slanderous gossip about Lewinsky being a deluded stalker. But it is proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Likewise, Posner thinks it remains "unclear" whether Clinton's second "We were never alone, right?" conversation with Currie occurred "before or after" the president knew Starr was investigating his relationship with Lewinsky. Lots of people make this mistake, but that's no excuse: The conversation in question took place Wednesday, January 21, 1998, many hours after Clinton had been alerted to a detailed *Washington Post* story disclosing Starr's new designs. And so on. Mere precision—"closer engagement with the particulars" of last year's controversy—turns out not to be Judge Posner's paramount concern.

What that concern might truly be is implicit in a second striking feature of *An Affair of State*: the author's spectacular impiety. House majority whip Tom DeLay, Posner says, is an "impeachment-happy" hothead. Senators as a group, he says, are "inattentive" and "biased," most all of them "neither able nor willing" to fulfill the impeachment responsibilities entrusted them by the Constitution. Chief Justice Rehnquist is *mocked* in this book, no less than three times, for the clothes that he wears. And Posner derides the entire Supreme Court for its "ineptitude," for its "backward-looking jurisprudence," for its "naive" and "gratuitous" rulings against presidential authority.

AP / Wide World Photos

Which brings us to the president himself. Bill Clinton reminds Posner "of how tyrants exhibit their power by forcing their subjects to express agreement with lies that no one believes." Clinton "flaunts his religiosity, but gives religion a bad name." Clinton demonstrates "a radical deficiency of moral courage." Clinton has only "splinters of a fractured personality." Clinton has "character flaws weird enough to have incited a search for psychiatric explanations."

Remind yourself that Richard A. Posner is not a wiseacre journalist or a late-night comic, but the life-tenured chief judge of a federal appellate court—a leading light of the judicial branch. And then try to recall when last a senior official used such brutal words as Posner's to describe his peers and superiors in public service. The answer is: never. There isn't even a name for this custom in America; it simply isn't done. We assume that our public men will decline to deprecate themselves as a uniform class of clowns—or worse—in a "comedy" of organized democracy. We assume it because we find the suggestion insulting. We still, even after 1998, do not believe that the project of American self-governance has become a vulgar and unimportant joke.

Yet Posner all but explicitly belittles this objection as so much retrograde sentimentality. A cheerfully cynical realism about national politics is his preferred approach, and it thoroughly colors his review of the debate over Clinton's impeachment. He has no patience with either side.

Arguments offered last year in the president's defense? Posner shreds each, in turn, with gusto. The attacks on Ken Starr were all "slanders with no credible basis." Posner finds preposterous any suggestion that Clinton might be technically innocent of his alleged crimes, and he calls the claim that such charges are only rarely prosecuted an outright fantasy. Those hundreds of academics who delivered testimony and published petitions contending that tradition and the Constitution would be ripped asunder were this president removed from office—they get a swift whack of the judge's gavel. No scholar "who had bothered to examine the history of impeachment in the United States could have written or signed" such stuff. Posner admits that the House impeachment articles against William Jefferson Clinton were fully and properly grounded in both fact and law.

And why not then convict him? Why would our "pragmatist" judge still "lean against impeachment"?

Because, first and least, Posner is disappointed that the campaign against Clinton was what he takes to be an overheated *Kulturkampf* energized primarily by "moralistic conservatives." According to Posner, these conservatives hated Clinton long before anyone had heard of Monica Lewinsky. They hated him for his positions on sex-related policy questions: abortion, feminism, homosexuality. So when Lewinsky finally did appear, adding adultery to the mix, these conservatives tried to expel the president from Washington purely because

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he was a libertine. The movement reflected a "residuum of sexual puritanism in the United States." Which Posner considers "dysfunctional."

Adultery is "normative," he comforts us. And Clinton's adultery was of the best variety. Fellatio on the side, Posner notes, is "securely contraceptive, relatively unlikely to transmit a sexually transmitted disease, and (for most men and women) less emotionally intimate than vaginal intercourse" and therefore "less threatening to a marriage." Phone sex, Posner adds, does "better yet on these dimensions." And that business with the cigar? "Radical feminists" should welcome the president's initiative, here, as an "implicit endorsement of the dildo."

Golly. How could we have overlooked such virtue?

There was a less philistine argument available to conservatives, Posner offers, one they could have used instead of ranting about sex, sex, sex. They might have said that Clinton "engaged in a pattern of criminal behavior and obsessive public lying the tendency of which was to disparage, undermine, and even subvert the judicial system of the United States, the American ideology of the rule of law, and the role and office of the president." They might have said Clinton's behavior was a "powerful affront to fundamental and deeply cherished symbols and usages of American government, an affront perhaps unprecedented in the history of the presidency." They might have said Clinton cultivated "a deep disrespect for the presidency." They might have made "the most powerful case for impeachment." But they didn't, Posner complains.

In fact, some of us witless moralists did make precisely this case, at extended length, and never once in the process suggested that promiscuity was an impeachable offense. But the force of even this "most powerful" argument—the crux of which Posner accepts as true—is not force enough, he declares. And here the judge's contempt for Tom DeLay, William Rehnquist, and all the rest at last rises to the level of coherent theory.

Rather outlandish theory. For in Posner's eyes, our public men, the president included, might be every bit as bad as the worst you can say about them. And he means to persuade us that it *still won't matter*. Morality is "not central to our politics and attitudes" any longer. The nation is "running nicely on autopilot just now." We are "sophisticated." We have "attained a level of political maturity at which widespread disillusionment with the moral and intellectual qualities of our political leaders will not cause the sky to fall." Yes, Clinton has "defiled" the presidency. And, no, it's not worth troubling ourselves to do anything about it. He's only the president; most of us "do not and should not care about preserving the dignity of his office."

Really? Clinton's defenders have never dared make an argument so extreme. Clinton's critics, it's safe to say, will never accept such an argument. And while it is true that the great, muddled rest of the country did last year "lean against impeachment," there is no evidence that theirs was quite the coruscating pragmatism that Chief Judge Posner extols. These are the people who still take tourist trips to the White House, even today, and walk through its rooms in a reverent hush, without ever having been asked to keep quiet. They seem not yet to be as "sophisticated" as Posner imagines. We may be thankful for that, at least. ♦

Hitchcock's Mystery

What makes the films of Alfred Hitchcock great?

BY J. BOTTUM & JONATHAN V. LAST

There's a well-known story told about Alfred Hitchcock—one of those anecdotes of a famous man's childhood that are supposed to reveal the origins of all his later work. Hitchcock's father once gave his son a note and sent him down to the police station—where an officer, following the note's instructions, locked the child in a cell. "This is what we do to boys who are naughty," he explained when he released the young Hitchcock ten minutes later.

The fact that this story is well known stands as proof of the almost universal desire to find a unifying explanation for the man's art. Born a hundred years ago, on August 13, 1899, Hitchcock is one of the few film figures who deserves the attention they've received. He ranks among the tiny cadre of directors who achieved a marquee status trumping even his actors. Publicity photos for 1963's *The Birds* featured Hitchcock sitting with his star, Tippi Hedren. The director of fifty-four movies, he defined an entire genre, and nearly every moment in his work is so distinctive it cannot be mistaken for anyone else's.

Take, for example, the scene in the 1951 *Strangers on a Train* in which Farley Granger comes late at night to warn the father of Robert Walker that his son wants to have him killed. As Granger first sneaks into the house, a large mastiff appears, growling to protect his master's family. But when Granger puts out his hand, the dog lowers his head and accepts a pat, recognizing the intruder's peaceful intentions. In the master bedroom, however, waits Robert Walker instead of his father, and he rises up to denounce Granger for trying to betray him, while the dog slavers by his side.

Loyal watchdog, infallible judge of good and evil, and the devil's companion: Hitchcock uses that one dog to create three distinct canine clichés in as many minutes. It's a brilliant piece of filmmaking. And, if you think about it for a moment, it doesn't make any sense at all.

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Paramount Pictures

Jimmy Stewart questions Kim Novak in the 1958 Vertigo.

But that's the thing about Hitchcock. He doesn't give you a moment to think about it. You don't have time to notice the inconsistencies and implausibilities as he roars along. Each tense moment makes sense, and the whole makes sense. And all the plot holes and wild coincidences occur somewhere at a middle level that doesn't seem to matter.

It was while he was working in an advertising department that Hitchcock first heard about a film studio opening in London, and he wrangled a job designing title cards. Slowly moving up in the industry, he was hired in 1923 by Gainsborough Pictures and by 1925 had finished his first film.

His credits began to pile up quickly. By the time he married Alma Reville in December 1926, he had completed his first thriller, *The Lodger*, a box-office smash about a man mistaken for Jack the Ripper. In 1929, the Hitchcocks had their only child, a daughter named Patricia. Five years later—after directing seventeen minor silents and talkies—Hitchcock began the string of major pictures that established him as a star. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The 39 Steps* (1935), *The Secret Agent* (1936), *Sabotage* (1936), *Young and Innocent* (1937), and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) all found great success, critically and commercially. Offering Hitchcock a five-picture deal for $800,000, the American producer David O. Selznick drew Hitchcock to Hollywood, where his first American movie, *Rebecca*, won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1940.

With World War II in full swing, Hitchcock made a trio of sensational propaganda films, *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *Saboteur* (1942), and *Lifeboat* (1944). Under the old Hollywood system, however, a studio executive would assign the cast and crew to a movie, and for *Saboteur*, Hitchcock was given Robert Cummings and Priscilla Lane, two decidedly inferior actors. It planted a seed of discontent in the director's mind. He frequently clashed with Selznick, and though *Spellbound* (1945) and *Notorious* (1946) were hits, his final Selznick picture, *The Paradine Case* (1947), was a box-office disappointment. (Hitchcock would have the last laugh: In the 1954 *Rear Window*, he cast Raymond Burr, a Selznick look-alike, as the evil murderer.)

Free at last from the studio system, Hitchcock was set to produce his own movies. But his independent company lasted for only two pictures, *Rope* (1948), his first color film, and *Under Capricorn* (1949). He returned to the major studios (and to black and white) for *Strangers on a Train* and *I Confess* (1953).

The second half of the 1950s were good for Hitchcock. In addition to launching his television series, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, he turned out such work as *Rear Window*, *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), *The Wrong Man* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), and *North by Northwest* (1959). In 1960, he made *Psycho*, his most famous work. *Psycho* had genuine horror and a good marketing gimmick, but it marked the beginning of the end. Hitchcock would make only six more movies, with the 1972 *Frenzy* alone deserving good notices. After completing *Family Plot* in 1976, he retired, dying quietly in Los Angeles on April 29, 1980.

In truth, the story of his childhood experience of jail does explain a lot about Hitchcock's movies. It may have been simply the limited technology of 1938 that compelled Hitchcock to shoot *The Lady Vanishes* on a set only ninety feet long. It may have been merely the plot of *Lifeboat* that confined filming to a fifteen-foot rowboat. It may have been *Rope*'s origins as a stageplay that limited the action to a single apartment. It may have been dramatic necessity that made all of *Psycho* seem to occur in rooms too small. But after decades of such accidents, the viewer has to assume there was something about claustrophobic confinement that Hitchcock couldn't leave alone. There's a sense in which *The Wrong Man*, a semi-documentary of Henry Fonda's incarceration for the crimes of a look-alike, is the archetypal Hitchcock film. The prison always looms in his movies, especially for the innocent. And the camera always wants to stare down—as it does in *The Paradine Case* and *Frenzy*—on a falsely accused man banging from wall to wall in a narrow cell.

And yet, Hitchcock's Catholicism seems to explain just as much. He was reared in a devout household, sent to Jesuit schools, and married at London's Brompton Oratory. And from the false nun's high-heels in *The Lady Vanishes* to the Spanish mission that dominates *Vertigo* to the kidnapped bishop in *Family Plot*, the Church made innumerable appearances in Hitchcock's work.

The director made only one explicitly Catholic film, *I Confess*, and it was a flop. Hitchcock's choice for the lead, the Swedish beauty Anita Bjork, arrived on location with her illegitimate baby and was promptly replaced with the better behaved but miscast Anne Baxter. Audiences couldn't warm to Montgomery Clift, nor could they understand why a priest accused of murder wouldn't vio-

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late the secrecy of the confessional to save himself. But an implicit Catholic sensibility explains moment after moment in Hitchcock's films, culminating in *The Wrong Man*, when Henry Fonda's falsely convicted character is delivered solely by the power of prayer.

Perhaps Catholicism explains even more about Hitchcock's work. We sometimes forget just how much an outsider being a Catholic made someone born in London in 1899, and his films often contain characters who don't quite belong in their social situations, who are comically desperate to seem just like everyone else even though they aren't. The director's imitators often made films in which trouble is born from a character's wish that something exciting would happen. But, from Leslie Banks in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* to Cary Grant in *To Catch a Thief*, the archetypal Hitchcock character is a man who wishes *nothing* exciting would happen.

But there's so much else in Hitchcock that needs explaining. Perhaps his obesity is the origin of those odd, neurotic moments that occur in nearly every movie. He seems to have had a fat man's hatred of food, and, for forty years, from the awful Scottish meals offered the hero in *The 39 Steps* to the inedible French dinners cooked by the detective's wife in *Frenzy*, Hitchcock's films contained a distaste for eating. The peak comes in *To Catch a Thief* when Jesse Royce Landis, looking down in disgust at her breakfast tray, carefully extinguishes her cigarette in the runny yolk of an egg.

And what could possibly explain the director's treatment of women? You could certainly say he loved them. In his fifty-four films—thirty-seven from the modern era—he cast the most beautiful women in the world. He created or definitively confirmed the careers of Madeleine Carroll, Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly, Kim Novak, Shirley MacLaine, and Tippi Hedren. He undertook an uncongenial screwball comedy, the 1941 *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, only because his closest woman friend, Carole Lombard, begged and begged him to make a film she could share.

But you could equally say he hated women. Except for *The Paradine Case*, the 1950 *Stage Fright*, and the 1964 *Marnie* (all failures), the 1954 *Dial M for Murder* (whose straightforward, stagey direction, he said, he could have "phoned in"), and possibly *Rebecca*, he didn't make a single movie in which the main character—the real center of the audience's attention and excitement—was a woman. It is an extraordinary record: Of thirty-seven films, perhaps five had a real heroine.

Only rarely did Hitchcock allow women to appear positively wicked. There's the frightening Judith Anderson who tries to drive Joan Fontaine to suicide in *Rebecca*, the evil Leopoldine Konstantin who sits in bed and plots Ingrid Bergman's murder in *Notorious*, the cruel Marlene Dietrich in *Stage Fright*, and the grasping Laura Elliot in *Strangers on a Train*—and the latter two are both murder *victims*. Not a single, straightforward, unquestionable murder is committed by a woman in any Hitchcock film.

Of course, there's often something ambiguous about his female characters. Madeleine Carroll in *The Secret Agent* is a spy. Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious* is possibly a Nazi collaborator and certainly a party girl. Grace Kelly is a Peeping Tom in *Rear Window*. Eva Marie Saint is a kept woman in *North by Northwest*. Kim Novak is a murder accomplice in *Vertigo*. Janet Leigh is a thief in *Psycho*.

Most often, however, the female lead in a Hitchcock film is a prim, well-behaved lady whose unaccustomed sexual excitement draws her into helping a man prove his innocence. If Hitchcock did have a single formula, this is it.

To his secondary romantic characters, the director could be quite mean. Beginning with Naughton Wayne and Basil Radford as the cricket-loving Englishmen in *The Lady Vanishes*, Hitchcock filled his movies' minor roles with lovingly filmed character actors: the circus freaks in *Saboteur*, Edmund Gwenn as the old hunter in *The Trouble with Harry*, Lila Kedrova as the impoverished countess in 1966's *Torn Curtain*. But in the Hitchcock formula, the secondary male lead is always the criminal, and the secondary female lead is always left humiliated. Poor Barbara Bel Geddes loves Jimmy Stewart in *Vertigo*, but when she makes the mistake of teasing him about his obsession with Kim Novak, he stalks out, and Hitchcock cruelly zooms in on Geddes beating herself with her fists, crying, "Stupid, stupid, stupid." The shoddy treatment of Brigitte Auber, the smitten French girl in *To Catch a Thief*, culminates in Cary Grant's threatening to drop her off a roof unless she confesses his innocence.

But mean as Hitchcock was to his secondary women, he was even meaner to his main female characters. Think of all those Hitchcockian performances in which a cold but beautiful woman is drawn against her will into adventure with a chance-met man: It's Madeleine Carroll in *The 39 Steps*, Nova Pilbeam in *Young and Innocent*, Margaret Lockwood in *The Lady Vanishes*, Ingrid Bergman in *Spellbound*, Priscilla Lane in *Saboteur*, Grace Kelly in *To Catch a Thief*, Tippi Hedren in *The Birds*. They all give up their principles, and that cold beauty always ends up melting in orgasmic imagery: Hitchcock cuts to a shot of a long train entering a tunnel as Cary Grant climbs into Eva Marie Saint's bunk at the end of *North by Northwest*, pans to fireworks exploding as Grace Kelly is lowered to the sofa in *To Catch a Thief*.

Of course, Hitchcock always did manage to make them look beautiful. And that points to yet another element in his movies. Laid on top of everything else, there is a joy in pure cinematographic technique. Though François Truffaut would celebrate him as an *auteur*, Hitchcock was really just a director. He wrote none of his major pictures, but his direction was so relentless that all his films feel as though he alone constructed them.

He was first a professional, of course—concerned to get his movies out the door. Between the ages of twenty-three and sixty-one, he averaged more than one film a year. He thought of the process as a science rather than an art. Before production began, he would draw pictures of the camera shots, often second by second, and the drawings reach down to the detail of how an actress should turn her head.

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Universal Studios

Alfred Hitchcock and Tippi Hedren in a publicity still for 1963's The Birds.

But his professionalism didn't strip him of directorial vanity. Hitchcock was a technical innovator long before complex special effects. When he merged a woman's scream into a train whistle in *The 39 Steps*, he was the first to break the talkies' connection of sound and picture. Lacking the modern Steadicam, he nonetheless filmed parts of *Rope* with a handheld camera. Lacking modern stop-action, he filmed the carousel scene at the end of *Strangers on a Train* by having his actors move in slow motion. So too, every one of his films has a shot whose primary purpose is to show off. In *Young and Innocent*, it's the long sweep across a ballroom to focus on the blinking eyes of a drummer. In *Foreign Correspondent*, it's a chase through a crowd of people waiting in the rain, filmed from above to show the disturbed umbrellas. In *Notorious*, it's the reflection of a horse race in Ingrid Bergman's binoculars.

And then, finally, there was Hitchcock's famous humor. By the end, it was hard to tell how much had been ossified into a public persona. But he consistently listed as his favorite film *The Trouble with Harry*, a black comedy about a corpse that keeps popping up in a small Vermont town. And in nearly every movie, he put some moment of comic relief that exposed the same sort of humor.

The combination of all this—the claustrophobia and the Catholicism, the disgust at food and the peculiar use of women, the joyous professionalism and the humor—ought to have made his films incoherent. And here's the great secret: Hitchcock's films *are* incoherent. Lean too hard on them, and they fall to pieces.

Think for a moment about one of the most famous scenes of suspense. In *Strangers on a Train*, while the falsely suspected tennis player is desperately trying to finish a match so he can chase down the real murderer, that murderer has accidentally dropped down a storm drain the cigarette lighter with which he's going to frame his friend. Back and forth the camera switches. The tennis match. The storm drain. The athlete straining to win quickly. The hand pawing for the lighter. The tension builds and builds—until, at almost the same moment, the match is over and the hand grasps the lighter. And then? The tennis player sneaks off to catch a train, and the murderer sits down to wait several hours for night to fall.

Of course, Hitchcock's plots are not always so hopeless. But what coherence they have is usually of the "If only I had known" variety: There almost always turns out to have been a simpler way for the hero to have found out the truth. Despite a distrust of the police in his movies—after all, if a man is going to be wrongly accused, he has to be accused by *somebody*—Hitchcock was often forced to rely on a semi-omniscient policeman to tidy up the story. And when it isn't a policeman, it's pure happenstance. The only unique thing about Hitchcock's use of prayer in *The Wrong Man* is that for once he offered an explanation of his fortuitous coincidences.

But once you start thinking this way about his films, you're forced back on the question of why they work at all. What makes Hitchcock a great director?

Part of the answer is the sheer speed with which he moves. The plot holes and inconsistencies in *North by Northwest* flash by far too quickly for anyone to notice. "What I liked about *The 39 Steps* were the sudden switches," Hitchcock said. "But it really takes a lot of work. You have to use one idea after another, and with such rapidity."

A better part of the answer, however, concerns the one sort of lie that Hitchcock never told. He never lets the guilty off. He never rewards crime. He never defeats or circumvents our desire to see justice done. Hitchcock's films don't always end happy; *Vertigo* in particular ends with the death of Kim Novak. But then, she had connived at murder, and Hitchcock's stories do always end justly.

And that, at last, is why they work. In all the little peculiarities that mark his films, he showed the smallest elements of classic storytelling. And in the grand sweep of simultaneously teasing audiences with suspense and assuring them of the ultimate triumph of cosmic justice, he conveyed the largest reaches of traditional epic. If a certain middle level of coherence and plausibility was lost along the way, who could possibly complain? Alfred Hitchcock had something higher and something lower than that to give his audience. ♦

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BEATTY 2000 EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE
"America Deserves a Percentage of the Gross"

To: Mr. Beatty

From: Pat Caddell, pollster

Warren, recent news reports confirm our worst fears. The threat of a Cybill Shepherd candidacy is very real. Our best information says she'll announce her intentions at a pool party next week at Suzanne Somers's house. Suzanne will be previewing her new diet video, "Binge without Purging," and Cybill is scheduled to make her remarks right after they serve the arugula-tofu salad but before they bring out the bong. All indications are that it's a go.

A few quick thoughts. A Shepherd candidacy threatens to cut into our national voter base, which already extends from just behind Jack Nicholson's house on Mulholland Drive into parts of Topanga Canyon. We may see erosion among organized labor. Joey, who runs the gaffers union and was primed to endorse us, says he may be forced to fence-sit at least through sweeps week. We're hearing the same thing from the Body Doubles Guild. As you know, Mr. Blackwell had also committed to us, but now he says Cybill's run may seriously cause him to reconsider, especially if, as rumored, she agrees to name Jim Nabors as her running mate.

In the past few weeks we were able to fend off other candidacies by rapid response. The DiCaprio boomlet ended when we pointed out he wasn't old enough. ("Patience, Leo," I told him. "Your turn will come. By the time you're 35, Warren will be drooling soup in some SAG retirement home." He perked right up.) But you may have to get personally involved in forestalling Cybill. Confidentially, her people have told me that "Ms. Shepherd would welcome 'feelers' from Mr. Beatty." I think she may be looking for a cabinet appointment, maybe the Supreme Court. Her people said, "She is eager to serve under Mr. Beatty in a variety of positions."

Give her a call. You remember her phone number, don't you?

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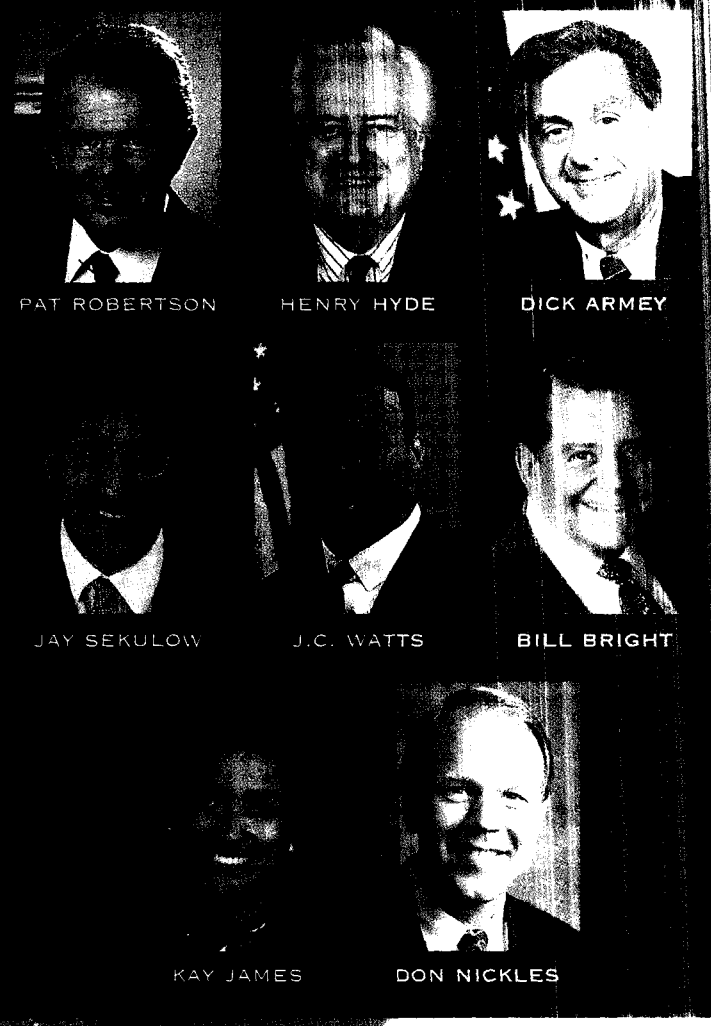

Other Invited Speakers Include

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Lamar Alexander
David Barton
Gary Bauer
Pat Buchanan
George W. Bush
Elizabeth Dole
Steve Forbes
Lindsey Graham
Dennis Hastert
Orrin Hatch
Earl Jackson
John Kasich
Alan Keyes
Trent Lott
Oliver North
Dan Quayle
Phyllis Schlafly
Robert Smith

Workshop Topics

- School Safety
- Hollywood's Influence
- Education Reform
- Right to Life Issues
- Parental Rights
- Effective Lobbying
- Opposing Gambling

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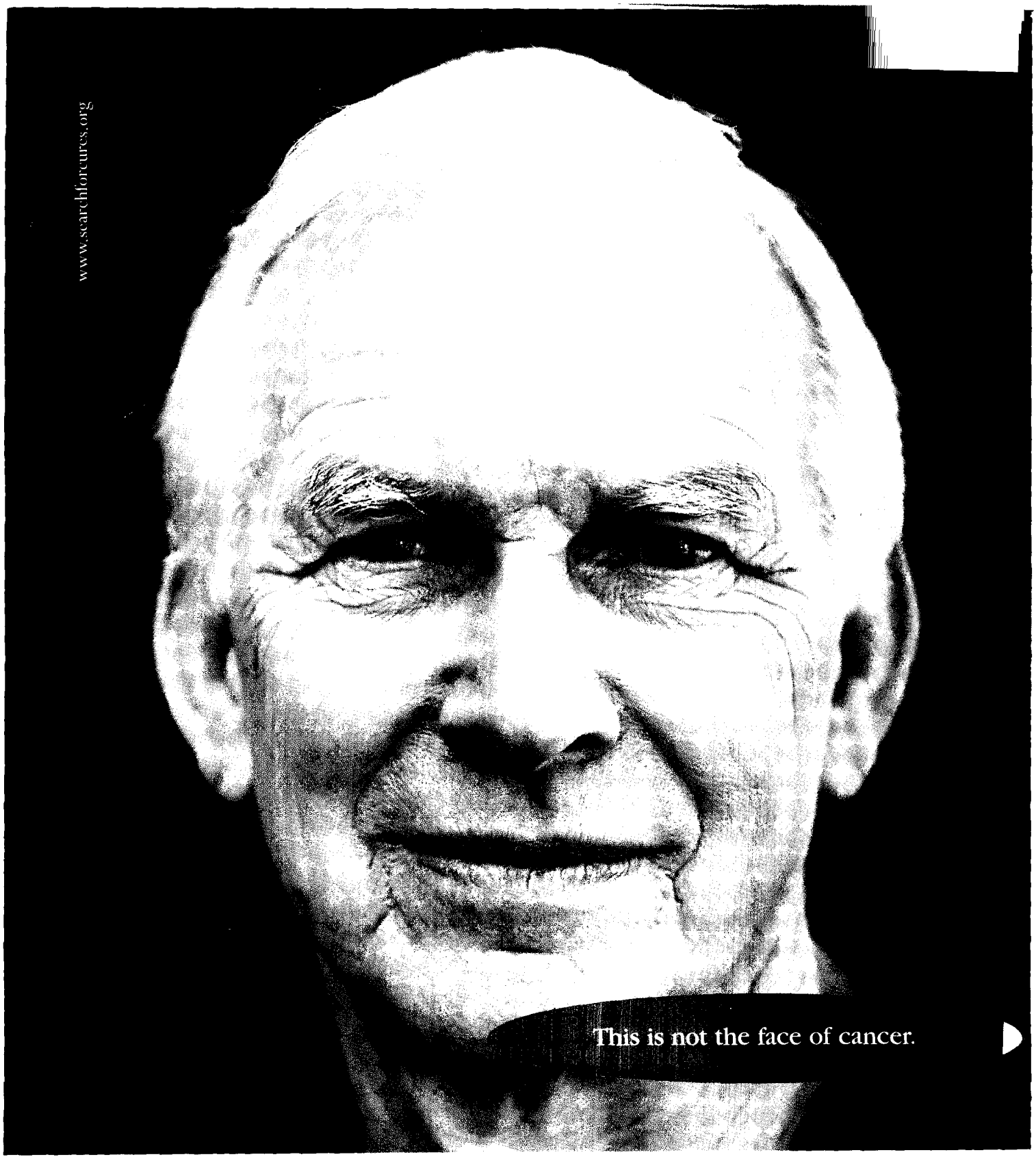

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